SPECIAL REPORT

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DECEMBER 1996

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A Christmas Wish List

BY BILL GLEASON



As this year draws to a close, our thoughts logically turn to the holidays. Having just asked my nieces and nephews for their Christmas wish lists, I am once again amazed at their creativity when it comes to the subject of giving and receiving gifts. They jotted down everything from world peace to the latest rage dolls, often in scrambled order. Not one sent back a short list. Options were the key. In that same spirit, I offer up a list of divers' Christmas gifts:

A MASK THAT NEVER FOGS: If we can send people into outer space for months at a time, we ought to be able to come up with a mask that doesn't need a bunch of accessories (spit included) to stay clear! This gift wouldn't scratch, fog up or need constant reapplication of whatever defogger you currently use. This would be a nice Christmas gift but we might have to wait for the millennium to make it a reality.

COLLAPSIBLE SNORKELS: While a snorkel can be a wonderful tool when it's actually being used, it is really annoying when it's not, as it tends to bang against the side of your head while you are using your regulator. This does not look or feel cool and is probably not cool. Why not make a snorkel that would fit in a BC pocket and be there only when you need it? This would be a great stocking stuffer and you wouldn't have to buy a new stocking to put it in, either!

HOSELESS REGULATORS: The perfect high tech gift for the diver who just has to have everything would be a regulator with no hoses. Imagine the looks of admiration you would draw from fellow divers! Not only would there be no ugly hoses, you wouldn't have to worry about the regulator being pulled out of your mouth accidentally. This is probably the hardest of all our wishes to achieve and one we probably won't see until the year 3000. We are more than likely to be stuck with regulator hoses for the time being. This would be the perfect present for that someone you planned on giving a gift but never had time to shop for.

A HEAVIER TANK: Since tanks are heavy to begin with and plenty of people use them anyway, why not be the diver with the heaviest tank? Using an 80 pound tank, for example, could bestow bragging rights to you on any dive boat. Since most men are obsessed with contests of all kinds, this could be a perfect gift from a significant other! Imagine all the air you could put in it and what a perfect practical joke for your buddy when he/she tries to help you put it on! Since no one is looking into making tanks lighter, the obvious conclusion to draw is that heavy tanks must be cool. If that's true, then the diver with the heaviest tank must win. Figure that one out.



ODORLESS NEOPRENE: For those who forget to unpack their dive equipment, this is a natural. Neoprene wetsuits have a universal tendency to pick up and intensify odors. This is particularly true if you "stimulate" the neoprene, as many divers do, and then forget to thoroughly rinse and dry it. The manufacturer that develops odorless neoprene will not only get rich but will receive thousands of thank you notes from those who don't stimulate their wetsuits!

LIGHTER WEIGHTBELTS: Why do weightbelts have to be heavy and clunky? Scientists should be working on this problem.

REEF SILENCE ZONES: These would be special places in popular diving areas set aside for silence. You would not be allowed to use communication devices, tank bangers or yell into your regulator when you saw a big moray eel. Silence zones would mark the beginning of a new era in diving, inspiring someone to write a book called *The Silent World*.

DESKTOP DIVING COMPUTERS: Up to now, most diving computers have been small and compact. Some are so compact they are hard to read but technology dictates the smaller the better. Why not make a huge dive computer that covers the entire forearm? You could load all your games and popular software in it and, if the dive got boring, you could play solitaire!

***REEF ECOTERRORIST*:** When published, this book would resolve ocean conservation problems once and for all. For all those misguided folks out there who think water quality, overfishing, ocean dumping and pollution are real problems, this manual would debunk those myths. The real problem would become known—divers. Their accidental contact with coral reefs and fish feeding would be shown to be the real culprits. This book would also contain several chapters on how to solve problems such as "How to Discipline a Diver." Advance copies of this tome are rumored to have found their way to several popular dive areas already.

C-CARD TATTOOS: This one isn't out yet but it should be available early next year. You might even be able to get a gift certificate in time to put it under the tree. After all, if you forget your C-card, proving you can actually dive is harder than an IRS audit. But, with your picture and vital statistics tattooed somewhere on your body, all you would have to do is expose yourself and they would let you on the dive boat right away. This may also be the way to get thousands of members of the X-Generation into the water! It's a surefire winner!

While it may be several years (or more) before you can actually shop from this Christmas wish list, don't let this stop you from having a wonderful time during this holiday season. From all of the staff at SKIN DIVER, our fondest wishes to you and your family during the holiday season.

skin diver
Volume Forty-five • Number Twelve





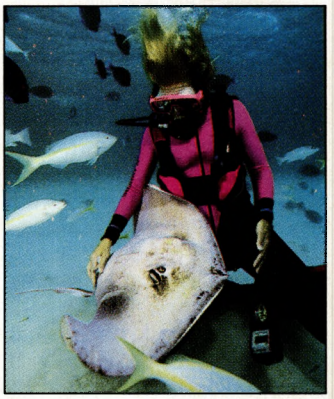
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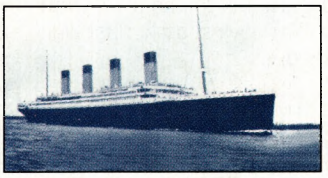
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MIKE BALL DIVE FLEET 56
Expanding for new adventures



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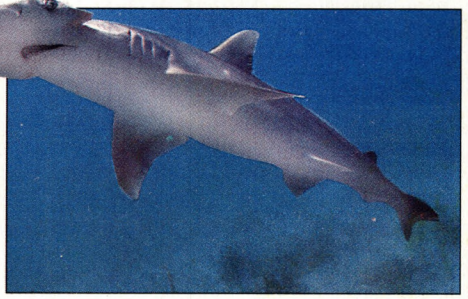


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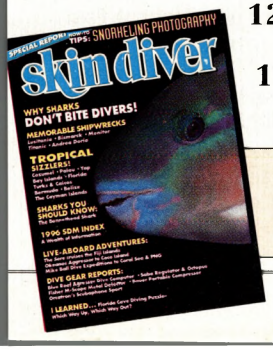
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ABOUT THE COVER: *Striking colors mark the face of the Queen Parrotfish (*Scarus vetula*), one of the exotic species of fish that adorns Fiji's reefs. Fiji is a rare island nation with verdant hilltops, unique customs and rich waters with an incredible diversity. To read more on how you can tour Fiji, see Fiji's Elegant Sere on page 104. Photo/Jack and Sue Drafahl.*

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Getting the Most From Your Standard 35mm Lens

8 Ways to Improve Picture Performance

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

The 35mm lens comes as standard equipment with the Nikonos V. It is an amphibious lens, one of the few that Nikon produces, allowing you to take sharp pictures both above and below the surface.

The 35mm can achieve this remarkable feat because the lens is positioned in an air pocket behind a watertight, pressure proof glass window.

Since this lens is recording light rays that pass through both water and air, it is subjected to the optical effects of refraction (the bending of light rays). Just as you do with a facemask, the 35mm lens sees objects 25 percent larger and 25 percent closer.

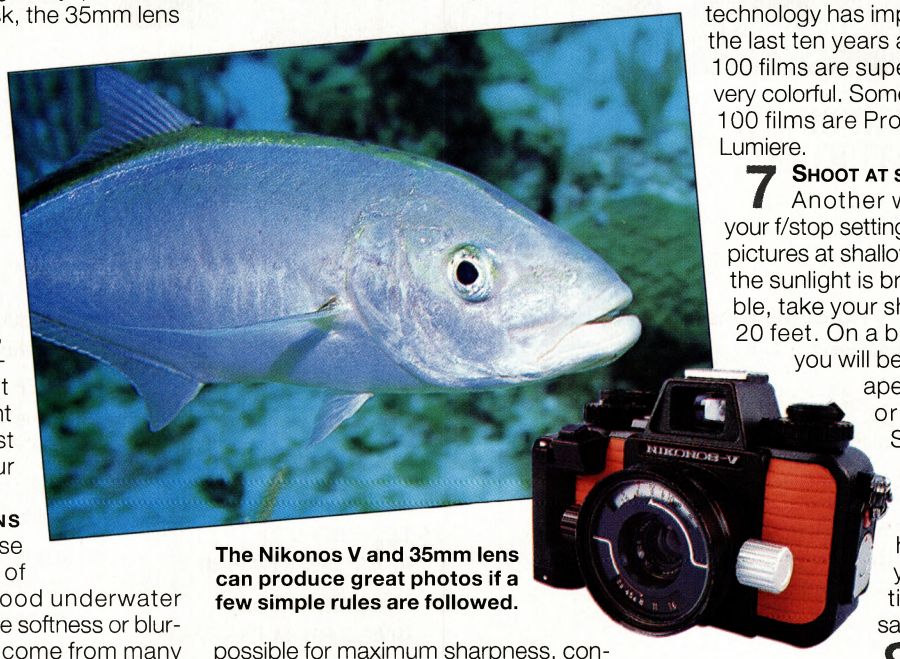
In air, it operates like a normal 35mm wide angle lens but underwater, refraction causes it to behave like a 47mm lens. This telescopic conversion makes the 35mm a bit tricky to use but sharp, colorful photos are possible if you handle it properly. Here are eight ways to obtain the best performance from your 35mm lens.

1 CLEAN THE LENS WINDOW. A grease smudge on the front of the lens can ruin a good underwater photo by causing image softness or blurriness. Smudges can come from many sources: O-ring grease (silicone), sunscreen lotion, hair oil, etc. Since grease does not easily dissolve in water, you need to clean the front of the lens with soap and water or lens cleaner prior to submersion.

2 ADJUST FOR REFRACTION. Most out of focus photos are the result of an incorrect distance setting. The scale on the 35mm lens is calibrated for apparent distance, not actual distance. Nikon made the lens this way to compensate for the optical effect of refraction. When your lens is adjusted for a focus distance of four feet, it is actually in sharp focus at five feet. You must add 25 percent to obtain the actual distance. This is especially important at close distances or with wide open apertures (f/5.6), as your depth of field is very limited.

3 GET CLOSE TO YOUR SUBJECT. You can improve your photos by closing the distance between the camera lens and your subject. By doing this, you decrease the image diffusion and color filtration effect of the water that lies between lens and subject.

Get as close to the subject as possible for maximum sharpness, contrast and color. The optimum focus distance (on the lens scale) for the 35mm lens is two and three-quarters, three, three and a half or four feet.



The Nikonos V and 35mm lens can produce great photos if a few simple rules are followed.

4 NEVER GET CLOSER THAN MINIMUM FOCUS DISTANCE. Keep in mind that the 35mm lens has a minimum focus distance (on scale) of two and three-quarters feet, which is an actual minimum distance of three feet, eight inches. You have a little margin for error with the depth of field but the amount depends on the f/stop being used.

Shooting pictures any closer than three feet will cause the image to be out of focus. A good way to judge minimum focus distance underwater is to place the camera at your shoulder and stretch your opposite arm out in front of your body. The subject should be beyond your fingertips.

5 SHOOT AT F/8 OR BETTER. Still another way to improve image sharpness is to shoot all your 35mm photos at f/8 or better (f/11 or f/16). This aperture significantly increases depth of field.

6 USE ISO 100 SPEED FILM. One way to ensure you can shoot at f/8 is to use fast film (ISO 100). Film technology has improved greatly in the last ten years and today's ISO 100 films are super fine grain and very colorful. Some of the best ISO 100 films are Provia, Sensia and Lumiere.

7 SHOOT AT SHALLOW DEPTHS. Another way to improve your f/stop setting is to shoot your pictures at shallow depths, where the sunlight is brightest. If possible, take your shots in 10, 15 or 20 feet. On a bright sunny day you will be able to set your aperture at f/8, f/11 or possibly f/16. Shooting your pictures over a white sand bottom will also help improve your f/stop setting because the sand reflects light.

8 USE A FLASH FOR BETTER COLOR. Using a flash with your Nikonos will bring out the rich colors of your subject, especially at close distances of three and a half to four and a half feet. A flash also enhances contrast and image sharpness.

The key to success in using the 35mm lens is knowing its limitations and working within them. Shoot at shallow depths, use ISO 100 film, use a flash and get as close to your subject as the lens will allow. Follow these simple rules and your photos will sparkle!



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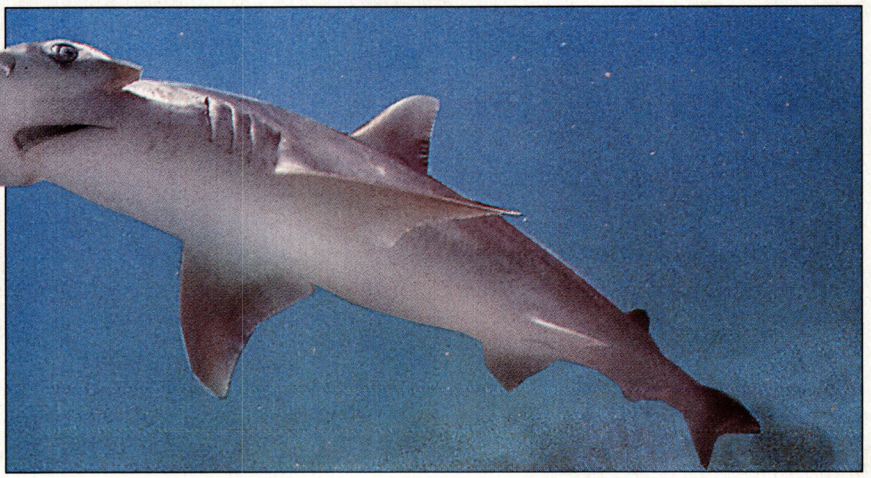
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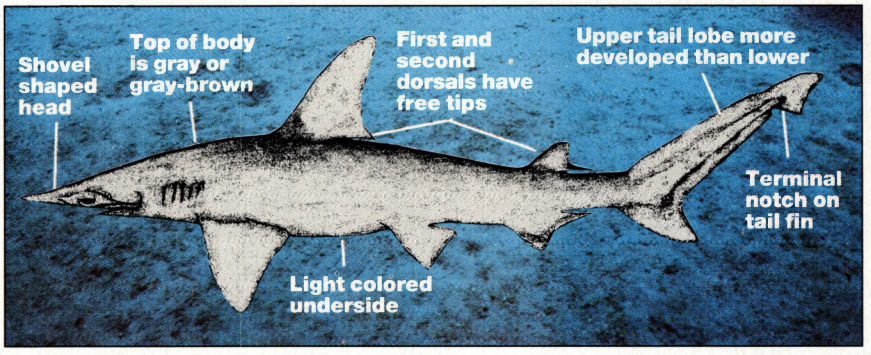
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The Bonnethead

(Sphyrna tiburo)

BY BONNIE J. CARDONE
PHOTOGRAPH BY DOUG PERRINE





The Bonnethead is a one of a kind type of shark with a unique, shovel shaped head.

Because of their strangely shaped heads, the nine members of the Sphyrnidae family (order Carcharhiniformes) are some of the most easily recognized of all sharks. Within the family are two genera: *Eusphyra*, with one species (*blochii)* and *Sphyrna*, with eight species. While some of its cousins can reach lengths of 16 to 20 feet, the Bonnethead, *Sphyrna tiburo*, is one of the smallest hammerheads, growing to a maximum length of just less than five feet.

The Bonnethead is further distinguished from its larger cousins by the shape of its head, which forms a nearly perfect semicircle and looks more like a shovel than a hammer.

The reason for the hammerhead family's uniquely shaped heads is the subject of some debate. Some think the "hammer" increases the sharks' maneuverability, acting as a bow plane to increase lift. Others think the large head and thus larger number of ampullae of Lorenzini (organs along the edge of the head that function as electroreceptors and chemical, physical and thermal sensors) help these sharks find food. Richard Ellis writes that a hammerhead swims "close to the bottom swinging its head in a 'minesweeper' action," giving it a better chance of "detecting...prey buried in the sand."

The Bonnethead's small mouth is on the underside of the head and contains posterior teeth adapted for crushing. Its diet consists of crabs, shrimp, isopods, bivalves, octopus and small fish as well as barnacles.

The Bonnethead's eyes are fairly large, with pupils that are horizontal slits. The moderately curved first dorsal has a free tip, as do the second dorsal and anal fins. The pelvic fin is slightly larger than the anal fin. The caudal fin has a terminal notch; the upper lobe is considerably more developed than the lower.

The Bonnethead is gray or gray-brown on top and has a light underside. The *FAO Species Catalogue: Sharks of the World*, notes the body often has small dark spots on the sides.

I've been diving 23 years and have never seen a Bonnethead, yet it is considered "An abundant, inshore, coastal, continental and insular shelf species, in shallow water over mud and sand bottoms, also on coral reefs; commonly found in estuaries, shallow bays and channels, at depths between 10 and 25m [32 to 82 feet], but down to at least 80m [262 feet] and into the surf zone and the intertidal." (*FAO Species Catalogue*.) In the Pacific, the Bonnethead is found from Southern California to Ecuador; in the Atlantic it ranges from North Carolina to southern Brazil, including Cuba and The Bahamas. It appears to prefer warm waters and is thought to migrate south in the fall and winter.

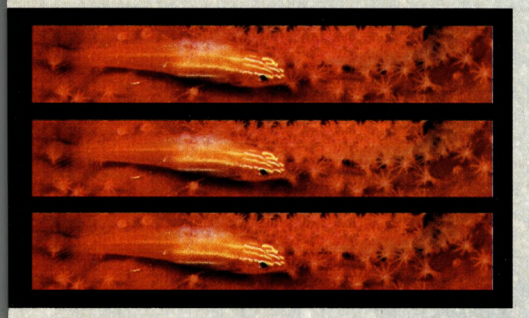
The Bonnethead is usually found in groups numbering 3 to 15 and segregated by sex. Mating is thought to occur in the spring and fall off Florida, since large numbers of these sharks are seen then. Bonnetheads are viviparous (the young are nurtured in the uterus by a yolk-sac placenta and born live); litters consist of 4 to 16 pups.

During six months in 1970, observations were made of 10 Bonnetheads by scientists from the University of Miami. The sharks were in a pool at the Miami Seaquarium. In "The Behavior of the Bonnethead Shark," Drs. Arthur A. Myrberg and Samuel H. Gruber noted "Some 18 postures and action patterns....and a definite dominance hierarchy at least partially based on size and sex." (*FAO Species Catalogue*.) Bonnetheads were chosen for the study because they are small, easily captured and do well in captivity. In *The Book of Sharks*, Richard Ellis says, "The experiment ended abruptly when 'all bonnetheads perished after an unknown chemical was added to the pool.'"

The study cited above found Bonnetheads to be nonterritorial and nonaggressive. *Sharks in Question, The Smithsonian Answer Book* notes this shark "is harmless."

Substrobe Packages

There are so many accessories for the Nikonos it can become confusing when trying to put together a system. That is why Ikelite offers a variety of complete packages for the Nikonos camera. When you choose an Ikelite package you are assured of getting everything you need to complete the system.
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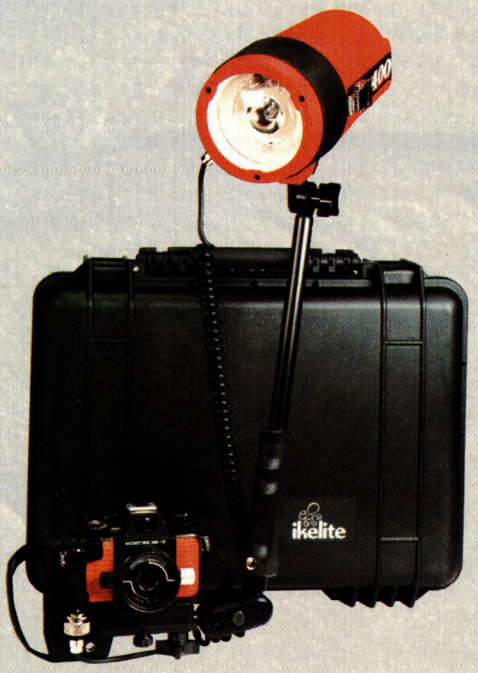


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Diving Science Update

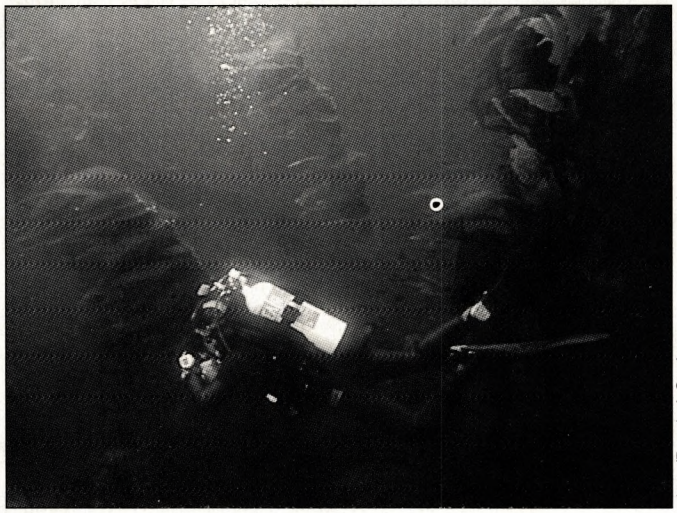
BY FRED BOVE, M.D. PH.D.

The Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society met in Anchorage, Alaska, in May of this year. A number of scientific papers presented there are pertinent to the health and safety of sport divers.

JAPANESE AMA DIVERS ENIGMA: An interesting study was done to measure the diving exposure of the Ama divers of Japan. These free divers perform multiple dives per day to harvest food from the ocean floor. They have been diving for many centuries and are a tradition in Japan. Although in the past most Ama divers were women, in this study only 20 percent were female. The divers spent three to five hours a day in the water, making up to 118 dives per day. The scientific team from Japan and the United States found that decompression sickness (DCS) did not occur in these divers in spite of their long daily exposures. In previous studies, it was discovered that divers could develop DCS from repetitive free diving. The scientists felt that rest periods during the diving day prevented DCS in the Ama.

DCIEM MINIMAL RISK TABLES: There is continuing interest in developing minimal risk dive tables, particularly for sport diving. In the past, tables were considered safe if they produced no DCS or only a rare case of DCS, in a large number of subjects. Researchers in Canada developed tables based on bubbles detected using Doppler ultrasound measurements. These tables (the DCIEM tables) are thought to be safe because they are based on minimizing bubble formation, rather than minimizing DCS. The Canadians who developed the DCIEM tables reported a close correlation between the safety of dive tables when the absence of bubbles is used as the criterion and when the absence of DCS is used as the safety measure. They concluded that even low grade (a small number) bubbles detected in the bloodstream increased the risk of DCS.

NITROX AND CO_2 SENSITIVITY: In December 1995, a group of diving researchers from Israel published an article in Undersea and Hyperbaric Medicine in which they described a group of divers who demonstrated an increase of carbon dioxide (CO_2) in the blood when they breathed oxygen enriched air (nitrox) mixtures. These individuals have a reduced sensitivity to CO_2 and can slow their breathing to conserve oxygen but develop high blood levels of CO_2. Because nitrox provides more oxygen than needed, the CO_2 retainers would have less of an urge to breathe and could easily retain CO_2. The investigators suggested that such individuals would be prone to oxygen toxicity and should limit their depths to 60 to 80 feet when using nitrox. These same researchers presented a paper at the 1996 scientific meeting that provides a means of screening for CO_2 retainers. They suggested that measuring the CO_2 released during exercise on the surface would reveal a significant proportion of those who were CO_2 retainers. If this finding can be supported by studies in a larger number of divers (they studied only 24) a simple means of screening for CO_2 retainers would be available. Divers who are known CO_2 retainers should exert caution when using an oxygen enriched breathing gas, since the increased CO_2 in the blood, resulting from reduced breathing, will increase the risk of oxygen toxicity.



photo/Bonnie J. Cardone

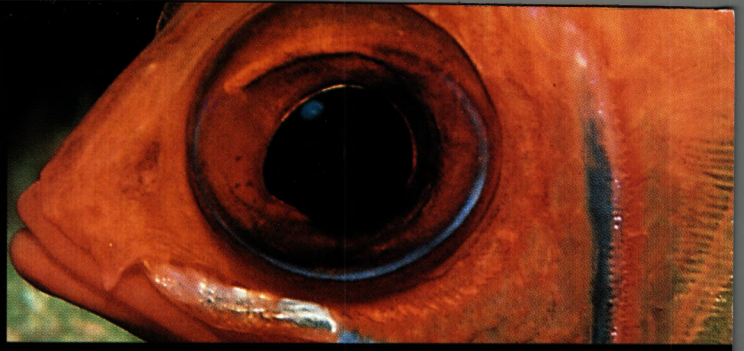
Diving with nitrox (above) was among the many topics discussed at the annual meeting of the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society in Anchorage, Alaska.

DCS 1994 OVERVIEW: Data from the DAN database were reported for DCS cases in 1994. There were 566 cases of treated decompression illness (DCS I, DCS II and Arterial Gas embolism, AGE). DCS I was reported in 144 cases, DCS II in 367 and AGE in 55. Half of the reported DCS I cases actually had neurologic symptoms. This indicates that proper evaluation of divers is not being done to detect neurologic involvement. Treatment of DCS I and DCS II is usually the same—Navy Table Six. However, the presence of neurologic injury has a different prognosis. Physicians and others who care for divers should be skilled in performing a neurologic examination to detect injury. The misclassification of type I and type II DCS seems to be owing mainly to a misunderstanding of the definition of DCS and the inability to detect neurologic injury on physical examination. Another DAN survey found that 40 percent of those with neurologic injury from diving had residual injury two years later and three percent had symptoms that limited their quality of life.

DCS BLOOD FLOW FACTOR CONFIRMATION: Investigators in Norway found that blood flow is an important factor in formation of bubbles from decompression. They reduced the blood flow in the legs of pigs using a clamp, then exposed the pigs to a deep heliox dive (132 feet for 180 minutes). The narrowed arteries caused a slower flow of blood into the legs and resulted in increased bubble formation. This study confirms the standard wisdom that tissues with reduced blood flow are prone to decompression sickness. This situation would occur when blood vessels constrict owing to excess cold.

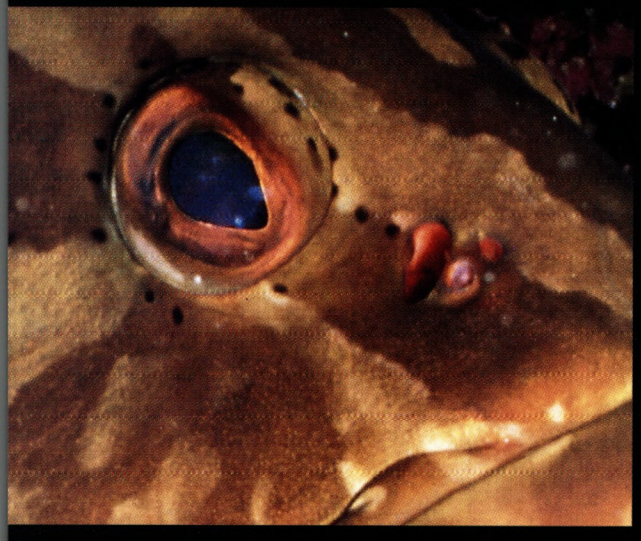
The Anchorage Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society meeting provided a number of advances in diving and hyperbaric medicine. Each year new information is provided that makes sport, commercial and military diving safer. The investigators should be congratulated on their efforts to develop new knowledge that makes diving safer for all who participate.







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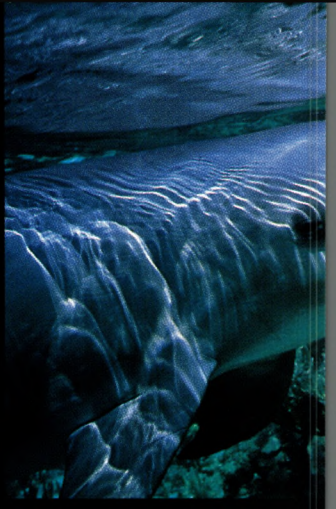




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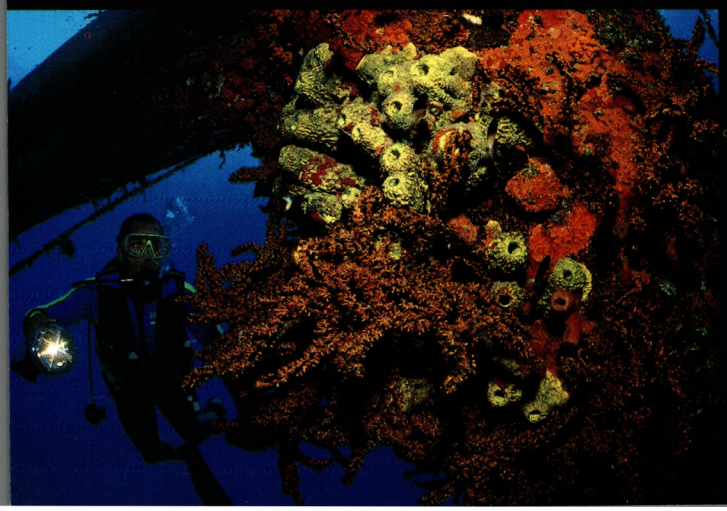
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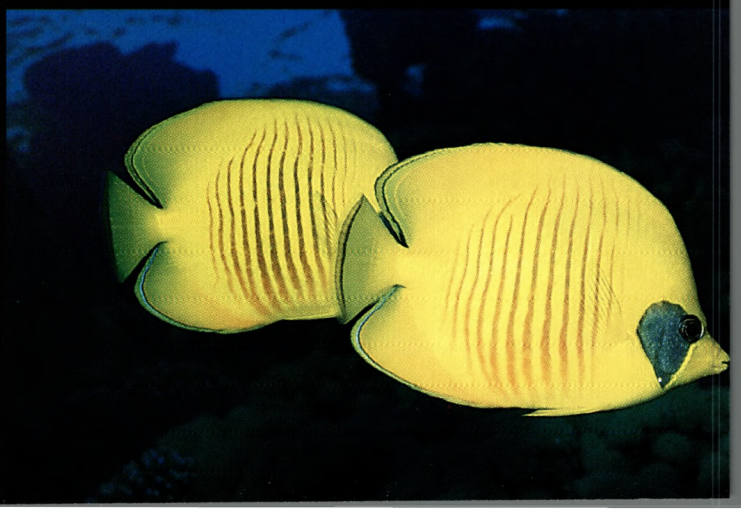
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Ascending Order

BY DENNIS K. GRAVER

Answer the following questions, then arrange the questions in order from the one with the smallest number answer to the one with the largest number answer.

1. The weight of one cubic foot of fresh water.
2. The pressure exerted by a column of sea water one inch square with a height of one foot.
3. The approximate number of gallons in one cubic foot of water.
4. The number of degrees a diver turns at a corner to navigate a triangular course.
5. The maximum recommended recreational diving depth.
6. The maximum angle of light reflection on water.
7. The minimum tank pressure for recreational diving.
8. The number of feet in a nautical mile.
9. The approximate weight of one cubic foot of air.
10. The force per square inch exerted by one atmosphere of pressure.
11. 17°C expressed in °K.
12. The freshwater depth equivalent to one atmosphere of pressure.
13. The approximate speed (in feet per minute) of sound in water.
14. The extreme hyperbaric chamber treatment depth.
15. The usual temperature at depths below 60 feet in fresh water.
16. The pressure exerted by a column of fresh water one inch square with a height of one foot.
17. The seawater depth equivalent to one atmosphere of pressure.
18. The working pressure of a steel 71.2 cubic foot cylinder.
19. The hydrostatic test pressure for a 3,000 psi scuba cylinder.
20. The approximate weight of one gallon of water.
21. The current recommended maximum rate of ascent.
22. The weight of one cubic foot of sea water.
23. 70°F expressed in °R.
24. One knot expressed in miles per hour.
25. The most common depth for a precautionary (safety) decompression stop.

Answers: 9. (0.08 lbs.), 16. (0.432 lbs.), 2. (0.445 lbs.), 24. 1.15 mph, 3. (7.48 gals.), 20. (8.35 lbs.), 10. (14.7 psi), 25. (15 ft.), 21. (30 fpm), 17. (33 ft.), 12. (34 ft.), 15. (39.2°F), 6. (48.5 degrees), 1. (62.4 lbs.), 22. (64 lbs.), 4. (120 degrees), 5. (130 ft.), 14. (165 ft.), 11. (290°K), 7. (300 psi), 23. (530°R), 18. (2,250 psi), 13. (4,400 fpm), 19. (5,000 psi), 8. (6,080 ft.)

Scoring: Two or less numbers out of sequence = Outstanding; three or four numbers out of sequence = Excellent; five or six numbers out of sequence = Good; more than six numbers out of sequence = Need for more dive training! Knowledgeable divers can recall all of the numbers for this quiz from memory.

International Underwater Medicine Symposium

The Federation Francaise d'Etudes et Sports sous-Marins, in association with the World Underwater Federation (CMAS), will hold an international symposium on breath hold diving **December 6 to 7** in Paris, France. The physiology, psychology, limits and techniques of breath hold diving, as related to professional and recreational activities, will be discussed.

For more information, contact Dr. Michel Leloup at 21 rue Voltaire, 93100 Montreuil, France or call 01 48 70 92 93; fax 01 48 70 71 90.

Sentry's Scuba and Watersports Expo

Sentry Pool and Scuba will be sponsoring a watersports expo on **February 2, 1997**, at Black Hawk College, 6600 34th Avenue, Moline, Illinois. There will be displays from scuba and watersports manufacturers as well as travel and resort agencies. Nondivers will be able to participate in a Discover Scuba session and there will be valuable door prizes and raffles. All proceeds will be donated to Divers Alert Network. The hours will be 10:00 am to 5:00 pm.

For information on attending the event, call Sentry Pool and Scuba at (309) 797-9721 or fax (309) 797-5748.

1997 CME Conference

Duke University School of Medicine of Durham, North Carolina, will join St. George's University School of Medicine of Grenada, West Indies, for a CME conference **February 7 to 11, 1997**. The conference will be held at St. George's new campus at True Blue. Among the several noted speakers will be Richard Moon, M.D., medical director of Divers Alert Network and F.G. Hall Hyperbaric Center. He will lead a panel on hyperbaric medicine. Other topics will include hypertension, infectious diseases and sleep disorders. CME credits will be granted through Duke University.

For information, contact the Office of Public Affairs at (516) 665-8500 or fax (516) 666-7609.

Wreks & Treks '97

The Boston Diving Show will present the PDIC Celebrity Series Seminars, Wreks and Treks '97, on **February 15, 1997**, at the Holiday Inn and Resort in Marlboro, Massachusetts. The show will feature Tom Mount of IANTD (International Association of Nitrox and Technical Divers), Richard Nordstrom of Divecomm, Inc., Don Whitehead and Fred Calhoun of PDIC. Tom Mount will be presented with the Paul Revere Spike Award of the Underwater Club of Boston, a richly mounted, authentic copper spike from the shipwreck USF *New Hampshire*. The show will be open from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Tickets will be $10 at the door or may be purchased in advance by writing Fred Calhoun, Apple Ridge 2-6, Maynard, Massachusetts 01754. Make checks payable to "Underwater."

Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival

The Ford Seahorses Scuba Diving Club will sponsor the 20th annual Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival **February 22, 1997**, at the Ford Motor Company World Headquarters Auditorium in Dearborn, Michigan. Activities will include an afternoon and evening film festival, saltwater programs, seminars, diver's forum and a large exhibit of museum, marine artist and private artifact collections.

For information, call the Ford Seahorses Voicemail Hotline at (313) 769-2458 or visit on the Internet at http://www.webcom.com/cid/fsh/fsh.home.html.

Beneath The Sea Undersea Exposition

The New Jersey Meadowlands and Beneath The Sea will sponsor the 21st annual Undersea Exposition **March 22 through 24, 1997**, at the Meadowlands Exposition Center, Secaucus, NJ. There will be 260 exhibitors and 50 different programs and workshops. Renowned U/W photographer Stan Waterman will headline the event, which will include an international underwater photo contest sponsored by the Aggressor Fleet and Peter Hughes Diving and the debut of the Nikon School of Underwater Photography.

Topping the abundant list of door prizes will be a Singapore Airlines trip for two to Australia and a Nikon camera. There will be special programs for children (admitted free) and families.

For information on programming, tickets, direction and hotel information, send a SASE to BTS Info, 495 New Rochelle Road, #2A, Bronxville, NY 10708. Information is also available on the Internet at http:/www.cyberus.ca/~bts/ or e-mail to zig4bts@aol.com. For general information, call (914) 664-4310 or fax (914) 664-4315.

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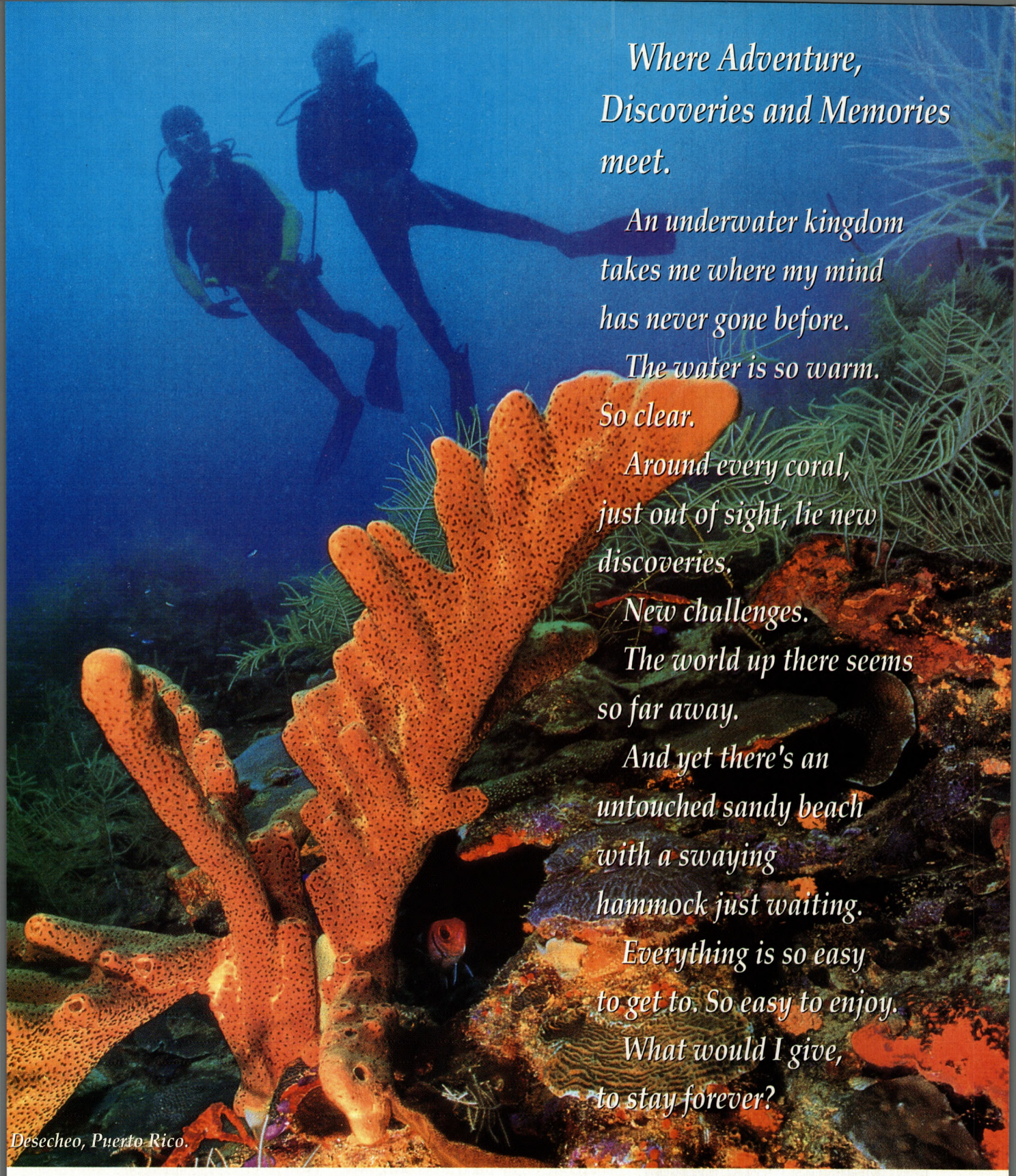
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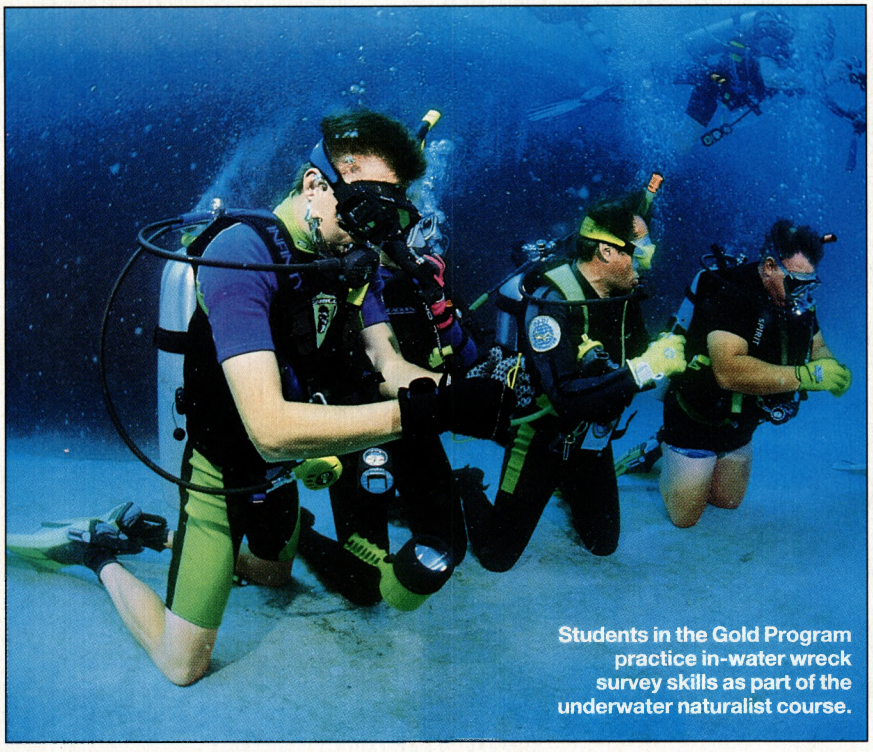
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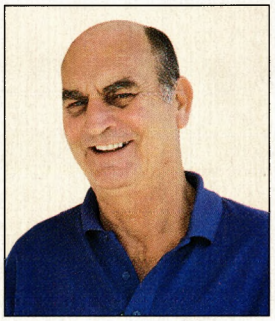
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Students in the Gold Program practice in-water wreck survey skills as part of the underwater naturalist course.



DIVERS UNLIMITED



Top: Dave Inman, owner of Divers Unlimited. This photo: Students practice wreck penetration using safety lines.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALT STEARNS

In our great land of opportunity, many dream of turning a favorite avocation into a vocation. While numerous divers pursue traditional Instructor Development Courses (IDC), PADI believes diving professionals should target a wider range of skills. This has been Divers Unlimited's chief commitment for 26 years.

Of course, seeing is believing. Under the roof of its 8,000 square foot complex Divers Unlimited is an impressive retail, rental and repair center. This store can do almost anything, including regulator overhauls, tank hydros, local dive charters (provided by the facility's two boats), year-round scuba instruction and airfills (nitrox, too). While each of these components could easily stand on its own, what makes this PADI Five Star instructor training facility extraordinary is its comprehensive professional training and Career Development Center (CDC) designation.

Divers Unlimited is one of only five CDCs in the United States. Before it can apply for CDC status, a PADI instructor center must first complete five years as a Five Star IDC/IE Training Facility. Under the leadership of Dave Inman, Divers Unlimited has consistently produced well trained and educated scuba instructors, earning it a long list of prestigious awards for excellence and contributions to the growth and advancement of the dive industry. Titles, trophies and awards aside, what can Divers Unlimited's CDC program do for you? Plenty!

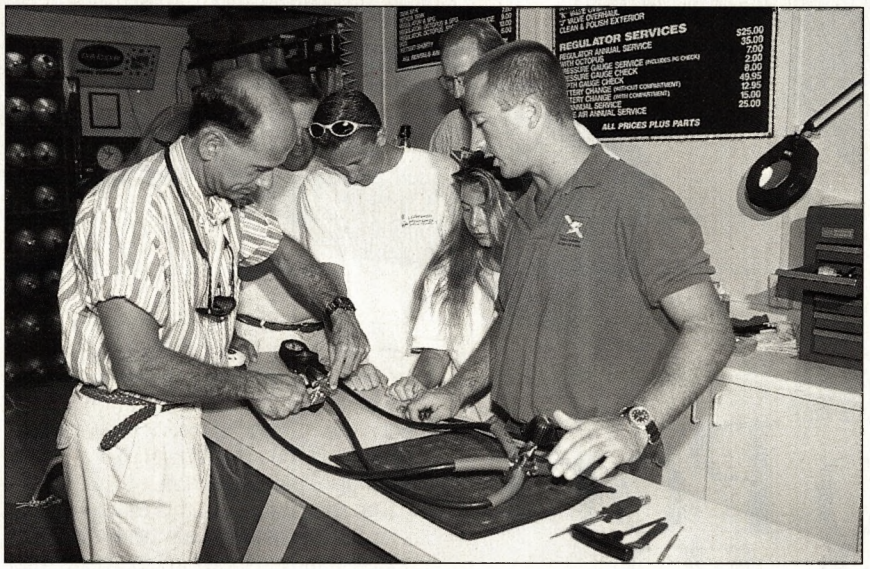
PADI presently requires all instructor candidates to be certified for at least one year and have at least 100 logged dives. With the Triad Program (representing all instruction from advanced open water to instructor), Divers Unlimited can bring a diver up to speed for the IE (Instructor Evaluation) in six months or less. An assessment of your current dive qualifications and your targeted achievements gets the ball rolling. This means anyone can begin training regardless of experience.

Under the Triad Program and following the achievement of divemaster status, students go straight into the two day IDC Prep followed by the IDC itself, which typically takes seven days to complete. After concluding the IDC, students take the IE, often the following morning. As Dave Inman pointed out, with the CDC/Triad Program, much of the diving is performed in the Olympic sized heated pool, a local lake and South Florida's coastal waters. By course end, divers are near completion of (or have surpassed) the requisite number of dives set forth by PADI.

Although the optimum situation would be to finish the course while everything is still fresh, for some students schedules can present a problem. To assist with this, Divers Unlimited's entire Triad/CDC Program is modular, permitting instructor candidates to accommodate their personal schedules. For example, two German college students had taken their Triad as far as divemaster during a vacation. When they return at the end of the semester, they can jump right into their Prep and IDC and finish with the IE. For a college student seeking a side career, it's a convenient setup. Also, courses taken during Triad are accepted for credit by

more than 2,500 colleges and universities around the country.

GOING FOR THE GOLD: An individual finishing the IE can set his or her sights on working in the tropics, either at a land based dive operation or on a live-aboard.



Helping Divers Plunge Into a New Career



Top: Students learning the mechanical subtleties of regulator maintenance. Above: Course instruction includes a variety of highly sought after nitrox specialties.

To obtain a more desirable place of employment—such as The Bahamas, Belize, Cayman or Fiji—takes more than a rudimentary open water instructor rating.

Immediately following the IE, the Divers Unlimited CDC Program offers its Master Scuba Diver Trainer Program, the first step in the Gold Program. This post graduate plan is designed to augment instructor certification training, beginning with Medic First Aid Instructor, which also includes DAN's Oxygen Management. In addition to Medic First Aid, students pick up five instructor specialty ratings and receive a basic certification in nitrox diving. Once five specialty instructor ratings are completed, a student can apply for Master Scuba Diver Trainer. This first segment of DU's Gold Program takes roughly one week.

After several days' leave, the post graduate schedule proceeds to Resort Instructor, which encompasses two more weeks of workshops in compressor maintenance and boat handling, including hands-on boat operations and docking procedures. In addition, students gain three more specialty ratings in underwater photography, equipment and nitrox. With the Resort Instructor graduate program, students are also introduced to the fundamentals of hyperbaric medicine with an orientation at Miami Mercy Hospital's Hyperbaric Chamber.

Considering the large scope of dive operations worldwide, having this comprehensive training will greatly improve your chances when applying for employment abroad. Customarily, most dive operations prefer those with good teaching credentials, equipment repair experience and compressor and boat handling skills. Furthermore, such operations typically pay $2,000 to $3,000 additional starting salary should the instructor be a Gold graduate. Similar to an MBA in scuba diving, this portion of the Divers Unlimited CDC program makes it a most significant component.

MORE THAN A CDC: In addition to being a large instructor college, Divers Unlimited is one of the largest distributors of PADI products and teaching materials in the world. It can provide materials to its customers overnight if needed. However, this is only one facet to Divers Unlimited's support services.

For job placement, Divers Unlimited runs a referral network for graduating students and operations all over the world. Often, there is a higher demand than supply for qualified personnel. This further substantiates why a large number of both Triad and Gold Program students come from as far away as the Caribbean, Central and South America, England, Europe and Japan, in addition to North America. On the other side of the coin, owing to Divers Unlimited's worldwide reputation for producing good instructors, a large number of resorts come to DU for assistance in employing personnel. As a result, many of Divers Unlimited's Gold Program graduates are placed in such locales as Bonaire, Cayman Islands, Hawaii and even the Red Sea and South Pacific.

As with any other form of advanced education, the tuition is not cheap. For instructor candidates, particularly those pursuing the Gold Program, Divers Unlimited can arrange a student loan that covers 75 to 80 percent of the cost.

To reach a Divers Unlimited career counselor for answers to your questions or to obtain an information packet, call (800) 289-3483 in the U.S. or Canada; in Florida call (954) 981-0156 or fax (954) 963-5255. Mail your inquiries to Divers Unlimited, 6023 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, FL 33024.



Nexus Macro Port 200MF

A Special Port for an Incredible Lens

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

If there is one thing that distinguishes the Nexus F90 from all other N90 housings, it is the Macro Port 200MF. Here is a specially designed, finely tooled aluminum lens port—engineered to accommodate Nikon's super long 200mm macro lens (technically known as the AF Micro-Nikkor ED 200mm f/4 D IF). This incredible lens allows underwater photographers to attain 1:1 image reproduction ratios at a relatively comfortable distance from the creature, so as not to frighten it away. If your dream is to shoot portraits of Garden Eels, Sailfin Blennies, Fire Gobies or other tiny subjects, this is the port you've been waiting for!

The Nexus F90 is produced by Anthis of Japan—one of the leading manufacturers of ultra compact metal housings for 35mm autofocus SLR cameras. Its most notable models are the Nexus F90 (for the Nikon N90 and N90s), F4 (for the Nikon F4 and F4s) and 801 (for the Nikon N8008, N8008s and N6006).

In addition to low displacement and compact design, Anthis is also well known for its impressive selection of lens ports. Each Nexus housing averages 12 different ports, each specifically designed to fit an individual lens or family of lenses. The benefit of this "customized" concept is that each port achieves minimum displacement and helps maintain neutral buoyancy and balance underwater.

NEXUS MACRO 200 LENS PORT

Lens Port

Port material:	Tooled aluminum
Window:	Optical glass
Exterior color:	Black
Length:	7.25 inches (185mm)
Diameter:	5 inches (126mm)
Focus knob:	1.1 inch (28mm)
Attachment:	Threaded flange and O-ring seal
Operating depth:	246 feet
Accommodates:	Nexus F90 housing Nexus 801 housing

The Macro Port 200MF is indeed a product of this concept. Made from finely tooled aluminum, the port is extremely sturdy and corrosion resistant. It has a flat window made of optical glass, a threaded screw-in flange and a finely machined O-ring seal. Most important, the exterior of the port is sculpted to the minimum possible displacement. The exterior dimensions are 7.25 inches (185mm) long by 5 inches (126mm) in diameter, plus 1.1 inch (28mm) for the focus knob.

The rear section of this tubular port is a larger diameter to accommodate its built-in manual focus knob, focus gear and focus ring gear (attached to lens). This device is indeed a most welcomed feature, for manual focus is the only way to go when attempting tele-macro photography U/W. Surge, currents and unpredictable creature movements tend to throw the camera's autofocus mechanism into a dizzying tailspin—constantly racking in and out. Manual focus allows minute adjustments without going completely out of focus. A flexible ribbed focus gear ring slides over the barrel of the lens, making it easy to install or remove.

As for the lens itself, two things are self-evident. It is expensive (more than $1,300) and produces extraordinary results. The extra long focal length allows you to get the shot in remarkable detail, when you just can't get close to your subject. Wildlife photographers love it!

Focal length in air is 200mm, which translates to 266mm underwater (through a flat port). Minimum focusing distance in air is 19.4 inches, which again translates to approximately 25 inches underwater (from front of port). Being able to shoot 1:1 macro from a little more than two feet away is the ideal tool for capturing close-ups of those shy, retiring creatures that never let you get close enough for a full frame shot. The lens weighs 2 pounds, 10.3 ounces—enough to offset the displacement buoyancy of the lens port.

One important point worth mentioning is the modification required to get the lens into the port. This 200mm tele-macro lens is sold with a tripod collar on the barrel. This device allows land photographers to

attach the heavy lens to a tripod for balanced handling. However, the collar will not fit into the lens port because of the limited diameter of both the port and the housing itself.

Instead, you must send the newly purchased lens to a Nikon Service Center, where they have the proper tools and skill for removing the collar. The modification of my lens took two days and cost $30.

Anthis produces two versions of the Macro Port 200MF: one for the Nexus F90 and 801 housings; the other for the Nexus F4 housing. The lens port sells for $680 (in the U.S.); the focus ring gear is $100.

There is also a Version 2 of the Macro Port 200MF. It allows more complete operation of the lens as well as the use of the AF Micro 105mm lens and 2x teleconverter.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Macro Port 200MF, Nexus housings or other Nexus housing accessories, contact an authorized Nexus dealer or Anthis USA.

A B Sea Photo/California
(310) 645-8992
(310) 645-3645 (fax)

Berger Brothers/New York
(800) 262-4160
(516) 264-1007 (fax)

Cincinnati Divers Center, Inc./Ohio
(513) 521-3483
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Marine Camera Distributors/California
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(214) 368-3555
(214) 368-3555 (fax)

Anthis U.S.A.
119 Dayton Street
Edmonds, WA 98020
(206) 775-3359
(206) 775-4076 (fax)
E-mail: anthis@isomedia.com

There are two versions of Version 2; one for the Nexus F90 and 801 housings; one for the Nexus F4. This port also sells for $680 (in the U.S.).

High magnification macro photography is possible with the Anthis 105mm teleconverter set, an accessory for Version 2. In the U.S., the Nikon version of this set sells for $285 and includes the Aperture gear TC2x Nikon, the lens supporter and the Focus gear 105MF. The Kenko version of this set is $300 (in the U.S.) and includes the Aperture gear TC2x Kenko, the lens supporter and the Focus gear MP105MF.

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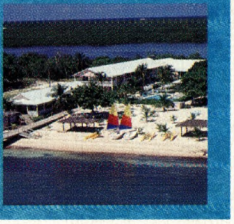
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Self-Help

BY JEANNE BEAR SLEEPER

Self-help is what you do to problem solve on your own behalf. Liberal doses prevent incidents from becoming accidents. Self-help is a nondramatic name for self-rescue.

Self-help begins with an awareness of where you are and how things are going. Does everything seem to be working and feeling right? Are you relaxed and having fun? Look at your console and see if air supply, depth and direction are all as you thought they would be. That's a quick personal status check and the simplest method of self-help.

If you develop an awareness of what feels and looks right, then you have a better chance of noticing earlier when something is out of kilter. Effective self-help begins with a pause.

The pause gives you time to do a quick mental and physical inventory. When you stop what you are doing, it is easier to identify what is going on. For example, if you are kicking but feel as if you are not moving forward, what should you do? Self-help strategy is to pause, think and look to see why you are not moving. Is a strand of kelp caught in your fin strap? Has a current come up? Is your dangling console wedged in the rocks? Identify the problem.

The next step is to solve the problem. Slow, deliberate actions are the result of a reasoned decision. Stop kicking, turn around and untangle the kelp or remove your console from the crevice. Make a decision to swim at an angle or get out of the current by changing depth. An appropriate action allows you to continue the dive safely and enjoyably.

Self-help problem solving has three steps—pause, think, act. It would take an entire book to cover every situation you could get into. Would you read or remember it? Probably not. However, focusing on becoming aware of your surroundings and then implementing pause, think, act self-help is easy to recall and do.

Mental focus is another important part of underwater problem solving. It helps you organize your response and then follow through with step 1, step 2, etc. Calmly evaluating the situation during the pause step allows the options you have learned to be considered. If the pause is skipped, an unthinking, perhaps inappropriate action might be taken. If you failed to pause and discover that your console was stuck in the rocks, you might have jumped to ridiculous conclusions—such as you were trapped and probably about to die. This incorrect assumption could have resulted in wild, frantic thrashing around, further entanglement of your other equipment, losing your mask, disorientation, panic and drowning. A pause and look moment would have nipped this accident.



photo/Bonnie J. Cardone

Pause, think and act are the three steps of self-help problem solving. Above a diver takes a moment to assess her gauges and equipment before continuing the dive.

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

The old saying "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure" certainly applies to scuba diving. Check your gear to look for signs of wear and age.

- Replace mask and fin straps when the rubber develops hairline cracks.
- Fill your buoyancy compensator on land. Does it hold air? When was the last time you unscrewed the CO_2 cartridge in your BC, if it has one? Can you remove it or is it rusted in place?
- When was the last time you replaced the battery in your dive watch, light or computer?
- Do you still have a set of dive tables in your BC pocket?
- Are the tears and leaks in your wet or drysuit mended?
- Do you have all of the needed equipment for the dive?

Before you get in a difficult situation, think about your responses. A little soul searching now makes for easier decisions in times of crisis.

- Would you settle down on the bottom and problem solve or immediately bolt for the surface?
- On the surface, would you inflate your BC (out of habit) to receive the benefits of positive buoyancy?
- Would or could you really drop things (and lose them) if you were struggling at the surface? When was the last time you practiced dropping your weightbelt at the surface? Would you drop a $2,000 camera setup?
- Are you in acceptable physical shape for scuba? Can you touch your toes? If not, how can you adjust a fin strap or massage a cramped calf?
- Have you consciously accepted that you are responsible for your own safety? Your buddy may be a back-up and help but are you unreasonably dependent on someone else for your basic safety?

SUMMARY

Pause, think, act are three simple concepts that will make your diving more fun. Instead of a bunch of crises during a dive, you will have a series of successes. Enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of a dive buddy but begin each dive by accepting responsibility for your own safety and well being. A buddy dive is a pledge to assist a partner who practices self-help first.

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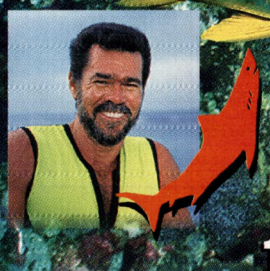
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Meltron's Saba
A Harmony of Performance

BY JIM WALKER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

In sports, music and even dive gear, the most talented individual superstars don't make a great team until they work together in harmony. The designers of the Saba regulator were well aware of this. Although the first and second stages of the Saba (and optional Cabo octopus) offer many of the most advanced features available, what really sets the system apart is the way the components work together. Each is designed to complement the others, resulting in a level of air delivery performance that's hard to beat.

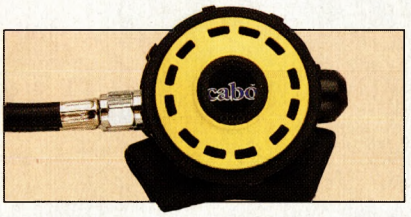
The high performance Saba first stage is made of triple chromed marine brass and rated to a maximum cylinder pressure of 3,500 psi. It features a pneumatically balanced diaphragm mechanism to provide a stable intermediate pressure between 145 and 170 psi. Regardless of diving depth or cylinder pressure, you'll get the same easy breathing at the end of a dive as at the beginning. Additionally, the diaphragm design isolates moving parts from environmental contamination. (An optional antifreeze kit for the ambient pressure chamber can be installed by a Meltron technician.)

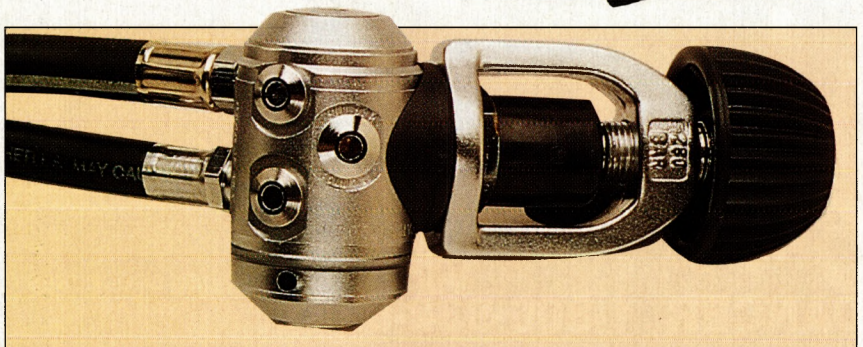
The first stage has two 7/16 inch high pressure ports and four 3/8 inch low pressure ports. The ports are angled for convenient hose positioning. Two of the LP ports are designed for accessory attachment and provide 1,700 liters of air per minute. The other two LP ports are designed to supply the primary second stage and octopus and provide a whopping 2,400 liters per minute.

To ensure the second stage receives the full, unrestricted airflow from the first, the Saba comes with a big bore 30 inch long, super flexible hose.

The Saba second stage is an amazing combination of high performance features too numerous to entirely cover here. We'll highlight a few of the most important:

The second stage is constructed of a special composite that is both lightweight and rugged. Its balanced downstream





The Meltron regulator's pneumatically balanced first stage (above) and adjustable second stage (top) provide high performance air delivery. The lightweight Cabo octopus (inset above) completes the system.

KEY FEATURES

First stage
- High performance balanced diaphragm mechanism.
- Two high and four low pressure ports, angled for convenience. Primary LP ports have higher airflow.

Second stage
- Balanced downstream demand valve offers 900 plus liters per minute of air.
- Dual airflow adjustments; cracking pressure and turbo boost.
- See-through exhaust valve inspection plate.

COMPARISON OF MELTRON REGULATORS

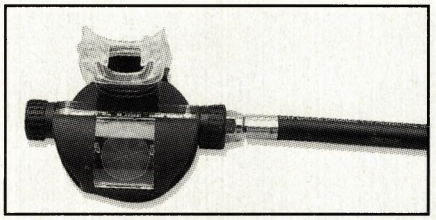
		Saba	Cabo*
	Price	$335	$255
FIRST STAGE	Internal Design	Balanced diaphragm	Balanced diaphragm
FIRST STAGE	External Design	T-shaped, angled ports	Cylindrical
FIRST STAGE	HP Ports	2 HP/4 LP	1 HP/3 LP
FIRST STAGE	Environmental Seal Kit	Yes, optional	Yes, optional
SECOND STAGE	Hose Diameter	3/8"	3/8"
SECOND STAGE	Case/ Cover	Fiberglass reinforced composite	Fiberglass reinforced composite
SECOND STAGE	Valve Design	Downstream lever action	Downstream lever action
SECOND STAGE	Air Exhaust	Under chin	Under chin
SECOND STAGE	Exhaust Valve	Extra large round silicone	Large round silicone
SECOND STAGE	Mouthpiece	Clear silicone	Clear silicone
	Warranty	Limited lifetime	Limited lifetime
	Comments	A high performance regulator, suitable for all types of diving. Dual adjustments on second stage allow diver to set airflow to conditions.	A dependable, easy breathing regulator, suitable for most types of diving.

* The Cabo second stage is available separately as an octopus ($125)

demand valve is matched to the first stage output, providing the same 145 to 170 psi and a flow rate of 900 plus liters per minute. The exhaust ports are enlarged for easy exhalation and there is a unique, clear exhaust valve inspection plate. This "window" allows you to instantly check the condition of the exhaust valve.

The Saba second stage offers two adjustments. First, via a knob on the left side of the case, the user can adjust the cracking pressure through a wide range, to increase breathing ease or tune out free-flow, as necessary. Second, via an adjustment ring built around the hose/case connection, the user can tune in a turbo assist, which dramatically boosts the airflow without increasing inhalation effort.

Also made of a lightweight composite, the optional Cabo octopus is likewise matched to the Saba first stage. It comes



The Saba second stage is loaded with features: the knob on the left adjusts sensitivity; the turbo boost ring on the hose/case connection adjusts airflow; and a window allows visual access to the exhaust valve.

USER COMMENTS

Port selection: "With two high and four low pressure ports on the first stage, hose positioning should never be a problem. I liked the idea of the primary low pressure ports having increased airflow."

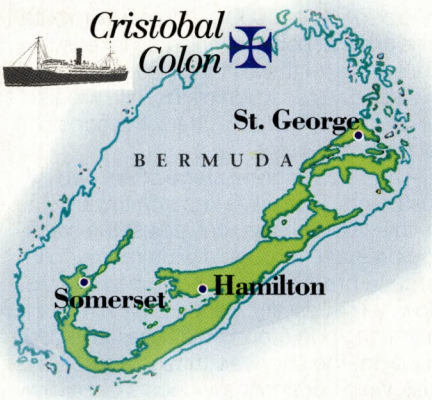
Dual airflow adjustments: "Utilizing the two second stage adjustments (cracking pressure and turbo boost) I could tune in the precise airflow I needed. I couldn't out-breathe the Saba."

with a 38 inch low profile hose and features a simple yet easy breathing design. Although it doesn't have the adjustability of the Saba second stage, its extra long offset demand lever can accommodate a wide range of operating pressures without increasing inhalation effort.

The Saba regulator has a suggested retail price of $335. The Cabo octopus is $125. The regulators are covered by a limited lifetime warranty and available at your Meltron dealer. For Meltron product information or dealer inquiries, contact Dura Pro Systems at (800) 345-6634.

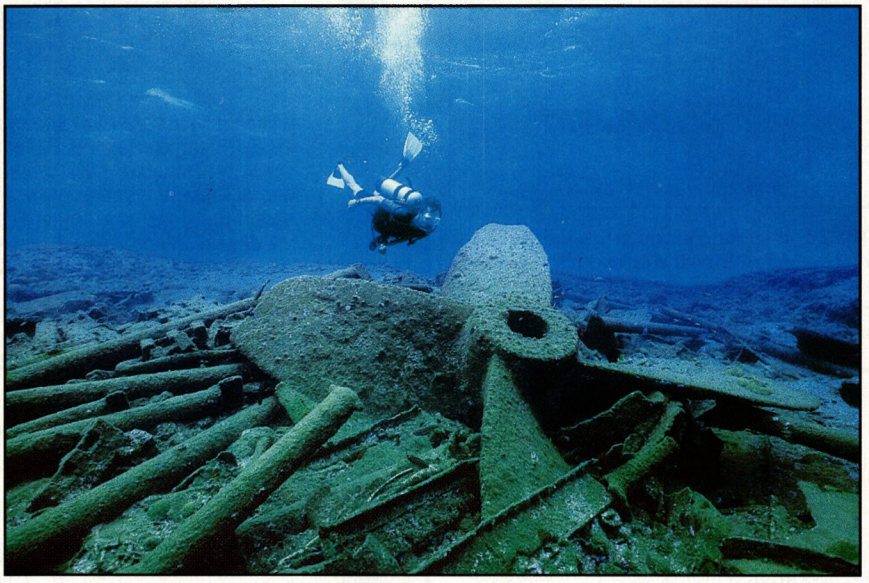


The Cristobal Colon



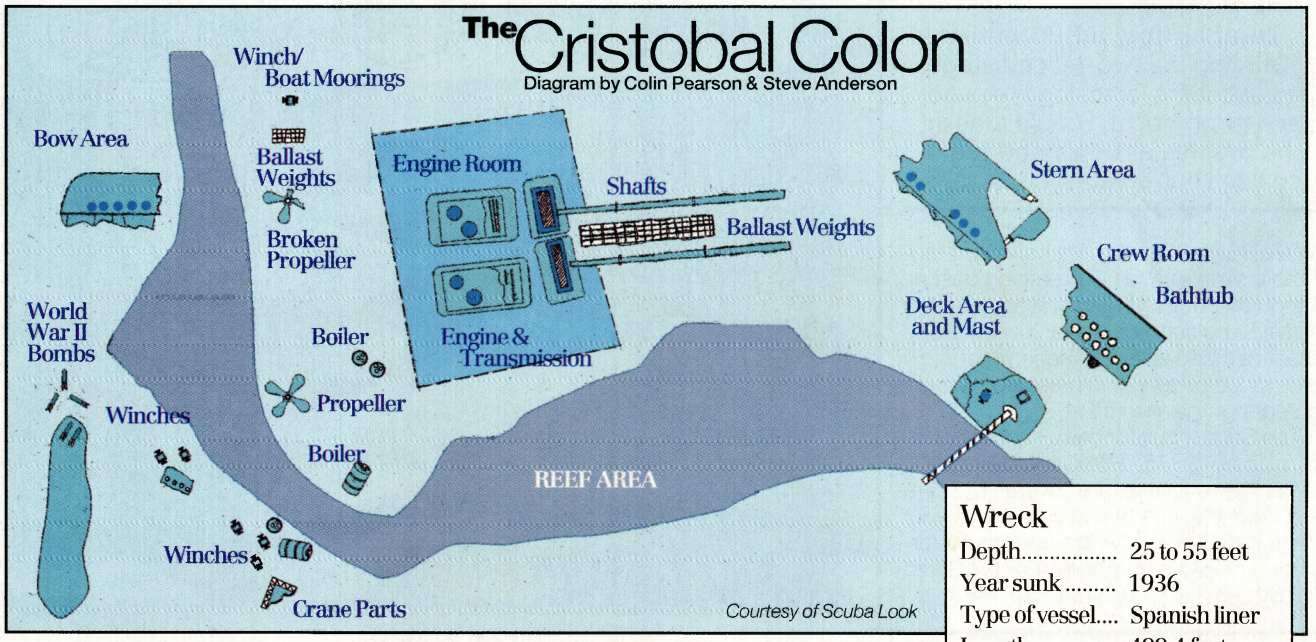
Bermuda's Megawreck Luxury Liner

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY



Of all the shipwrecks scattered around Bermuda's coral reefs, the *Cristobal Colon* is by far the largest and most awesome wreck imaginable. Measuring almost 500 feet in length and having displaced 10,800 tons, she is truly a megawreck—a shipwreck of behemoth proportions.

Launched October 31, 1921, the 499 foot long, triple deck *Cristobal Colon* was one of the most advanced and luxurious cruise ships of its day. Built in Ferrol, Spain, she was fitted with no less than eight steam boilers and two huge steam turbine engines that powered her gigantic dual propellers. This magnificent ocean liner could cruise at 16 knots and carry up to 1,100 passengers in



three separate classes of service. She was operated by Chia Transatlantica of Barcelona, Spain.

At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in the summer of 1936, the *Cristobal Colon* was en route from New York to Bilbao, Spain, when a special committee of Spanish Loyalists took over command of the ship to keep it out of the hands of rebel forces. Evading the Spanish blockade, the ship moved from port to port, eventually taking on a load of coal in Cardiff, Wales, before departing for Mexico to pick up guns and ammunition.

Commanded by a crew of 160 and with no passengers on board, the swift luxury liner crossed the Atlantic at full tilt in an effort to carry out her mission. Unfortunately, her radio officer was listening to a Spanish program from home instead of checking for navigational reports. He missed the warning about North Rock Point being out of order. As a result, the ship's captain misidentified the channel lights and the *Cristobal Colon* crashed into the reef. The collision was horrendous and the mammoth ship went hard up onto the coral reef like a beached whale.

Salvage attempts by local tugs proved fruitless and the giant ship remained on top of the reef, perfectly upright and rock solid; an impenetrable steel fortress. She was immovable yet from a distance she looked like a ship cruising the sea. In fact, her innocent appearance caused the wreckage of another ship less than a year later.

In 1942, another war caused the final demise of the trapped luxury liner. The U.S. Air Force used the *Cristobal Colon* for bombing practice until she finally plunged beneath the surface.

Diving the *Cristobal Colon* is an awesome experience, primarily owing to the excellent underwater visibility and gigantic size of the wreck. She lies just outside the northernmost perimeter of Bermuda's coral reef, ten miles from the island itself. Underwater visibility at this site frequently exceeds 100 feet and can reach 150 on a good day. The wreckage is spread across two and a half acres of seafloor—it is approximately the size of two football fields. It takes at least two to three full dives to see this wreck site in its entirety.

Diving depths range from as little as 25 feet to as deep as 55, depending on which part of the wreck you are exploring. The great ship is broken into three major sections; the bow, the midsection and the stern. Each section is an interesting dive in itself.

The bow is fairly intact and lies on its port side in 45 feet of water. Some of the deck railing is still intact, covered with corals and seafans. It is this area of wreckage that seems to attract schools of fish so there is a lot of activity around this structure. It is possible to penetrate and explore the bow area.

The midsection lies on a hard coral bottom in 20 to 30 feet of water. Here is where you will find the distinctively shaped steam turbine engines, long drive shafts and a huge assortment of pipes, tubing, gear boxes, condensers and other ship machinery. Two huge steam boilers sit side by side, marking the center of the ship. Another notable artifact is a pair of giant ship propellers, one lying flat on the bottom and the other sitting upright. Closer to the reef lies a third giant steam boiler, tilted and barely 15 feet below the surface.

The stern lies in deeper water, averaging 50 feet. Here you can find more deck railing and hulls that once held bronze portholes. An ornate bathtub lies between two slabs of decking and another can be found inside the stern. Scattered all across the bottom are artifacts too numerous to list—most of them cemented to the reef by coral encrustation. If ever there was a wreck that begged exploration, it would have to be the wondrous *Cristobal Colon*.

BERMUDA DIVE OPERATORS

The *Cristobal Colon* is just one of dozens of shipwrecks awaiting exploration. If you are interested in visiting Bermuda and diving the wrecks, contact any of Bermuda's dive operators:

Blue Water Divers Co., Ltd.
P.O. Box SN 165
Southampton SN BX, Bermuda
(441) 234-1034
(441) 234-3561 (fax)

Fantasea Diving
Darrell's Wharf
1 Harbour Road
Paget PG 01, Bermuda
(441) 236-6339
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This photo: Provo Turtle Divers' new state of the art Newton 42, *Chuck's Honey*. Left: Two 32 foot Island Hoppers join the Newton 42 en route to some great diving.

ART PICKERING'S PROVO TURTLE DIVERS

Turks & Caicos Pioneer

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN



Art Pickering.

Twenty-five years ago, Art Pickering was one of the first divers to explore the wall off Providenciales' Northwest Point. Things were different then. Flights arrived once a week; Art's 22 foot Aquasport was the only dive boat and the Third Turtle was the only place for divers to stay. Today, all of that has changed. American Airlines flies nonstop from Miami to Provo twice a day. Art has a fleet of superb dive boats and a large selection of accommodations is readily available. What hasn't changed? The Turks and Caicos still have the same spectacular underwater visibility, the coral colonies still grow high and healthy and the vertical walls are just as exciting. And, although the dive business has become more complex and the equipment more sophisticated, Art has insisted on retaining the casual camaraderie and fun diving that have been the hallmark of Provo Turtle Divers. Diving with the Turtle is like exploring new territory with old friends.

Whether your goal is certification, additional skills or just enjoying the diving, Provo Turtle Divers can do it. Instruction is available from resort courses and open water certifications all the way to instructor. In addition to the main shop at the harbor, another Provo Turtle Divers facility is open at the Ocean Club condominium resort, where classes are taught in one of the two pools. Naturally, Provo Turtle Divers has a complete line of rental equipment.

Art has been striving for the best combination of comfort, safety and flexibility with the Provo Turtle Divers boats. The main boats are two 32 foot Island Hoppers and one 42 foot Newton, all custom designed. The Newton is state of the art, featuring an open transom for easy egress, two showers, a sundeck, a fast, stable hull and twin diesel reliability. One of the Island Hoppers is nomally stationed on the south side of Providenciales, to open up as many diving areas as possible, regardless of the weather. The Island Hoppers are also available for private charter or groups. A smaller, outboard powered boat has recently been re-conditioned and will be dedicated to a reef ecology program. Excursions with this boat will leave from the Ocean Club as part of the REEF Program.





Patrick Miles peers into a thick growth of green tube sponges.

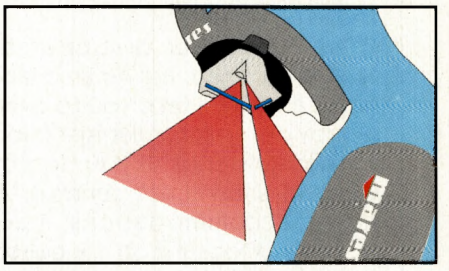
As early as 1970 Art was exploring the reefs and walls for miles around Providenciales, marking dive sites for Provo Turtle Divers. He discovered many of the Northwest Point dive sites, including **Shark Hotel**, where a deep chute cuts through the face of the wall, starting at about 100 feet and exiting at about 130. On West Caicos one of his favorites is **Highway to Heaven**, one of those dives where the water is so clear and the wall so sheer you have to keep close tabs on your depth gauge. When the weather cooperates, Provo Turtle Divers ventures farther south to French Cay, where the wall tapers more gently into the depths and is covered with the thickest soft corals in the Turks and Caicos. Mating Nurse Sharks gather by the hundreds each summer in the shallows of this remote island. Northwest of the Provo Turtle Divers shop is Pine Cay and sites such as the **Football Field**, which has a flatter reef, distinctly different from the rest of the Turks and Caicos. And, of course, right out the front door is **Grace Bay**, with its prolific corals

(Continued on Page 52)

Esa.
The Mask.
A Diving Revolution.



Like all truly ingenious ideas, ESA is extremely simple. This mask, equally suitable for beginners and experienced divers, brilliantly solves all underwater vision problems since it mounts six lenses instead of the traditional two. It is a true revolution in the diving mask sector, certainly the most important after the the introduction of the nose pocket. First and foremost, the field of vision is enlarged both laterally and downwards, thus creating a full-immersion effect, as certified by the test reports issued by the institute of Technology and Mechanics of Genoa University's Faculty of Engineering. Thanks to its bottom lenses, divers can now monitor the area around their chest, which was impossible in the past. Therefore, to read their instruments, they no longer have to lift their arms before their eyes, which sometimes results in an awkward movement when underwater. In addition, when they are in the water, divers will find it easier to put on and take off their diving garments and to use the accessories and instruments usually connected to the B.C. vest. ESA stands out for another distinctive feature; it may be fitted with positive and negative lenses at the same time, thus ensuring perfect vision at any distance to all divers. All the above characteristics



explain why ESA is the ideal mask for anyone who wishes to get the most out of diving.

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An Old Depth Record

BY E.R. CROSS

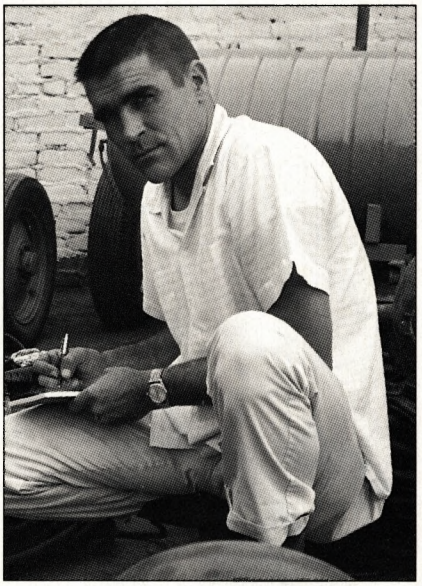


In the world of diving the two most nebulous things are shipwrecks and depth records. Many of both are ancient and almost mythical. As we try to separate reality from fiction, they become important to us. This Technifacts will recount the story of one very old diving depth record that has not been a record for a very long time.

On March 25, 1915, the U.S. submarine *F-4* sank in 306 feet of water off the entrance to Honolulu Harbor, Hawaii. The consensus was that salvaging a vessel, even a submarine, from such a depth was impossible. However, the Navy needed to know what had caused the sinking with the loss of all hands. In spite of many setbacks, the *F-4* was located and divers prepared it for salvage.

It was decided to raise the sub using huge pontoons. Giant anchor chains were dragged under the *F-4* by tugs. Divers Laughlen and Crilley secured the chains.Crilley made the first dive to 306 feet and was at the decompression stage when Laughlen made his dive. Laughlen became fouled, owing partly to nitrogen narcosis and partly to surge, which washed him into the rigging. Crilley descended from his decompression stop and worked until he had freed a severely injured Laughlen. Eventually, the sub was dragged into 60 feet of water and brought to the surface with pontoons. The *F-4* was finally dry docked and the cause of

(Continued on Page 27)



Right: Off California in 1963, Murray D. Black made a record dive to 321 feet using a Mark V helmet and compressed air.

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CAYMAN ISLANDS

Cayman Brac—

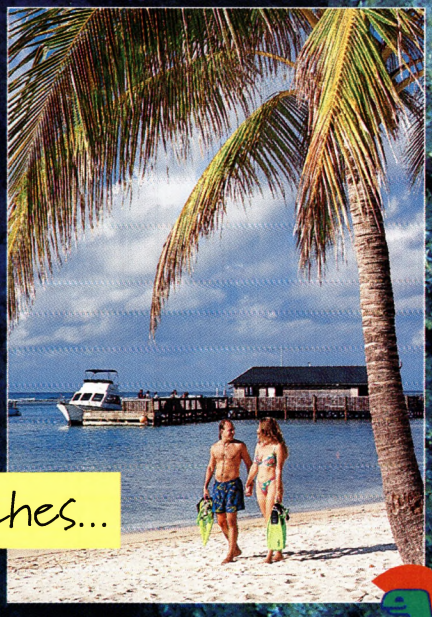
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The shipwrecks were awesome!





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and, of course, world famous diving and adventure. In fact, Cayman Brac is probably more than you imagined.

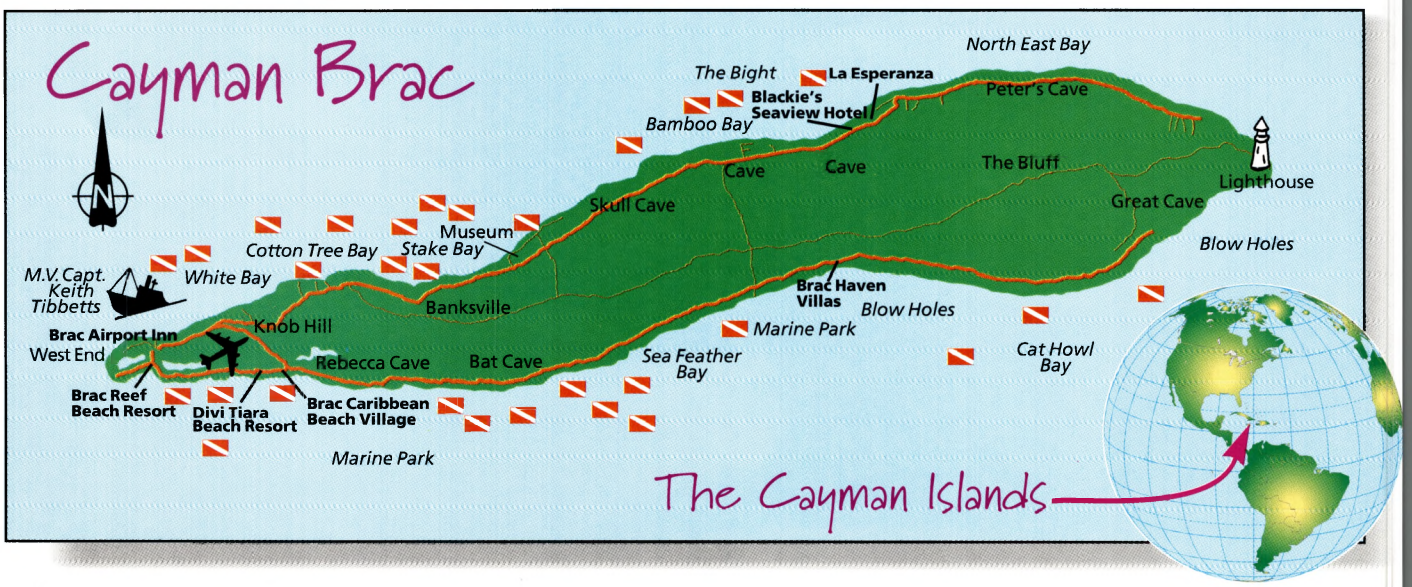
This tiny 12-mile island begins with low-lying land to the west and culminates in a 140-foot towering limestone bluff to the east. A walk along the southern coast reveals a dramatic and picturesque shoreline as you approach the base of the bluff. Gaze upward and note that the bluff is dotted with caves that

Everything's so beautiful & unspoiled!

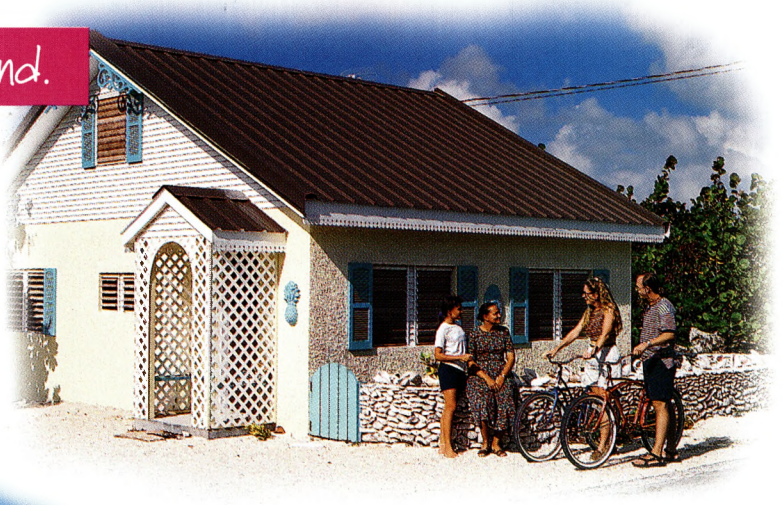




It feels like we're on our own private island...



Everyone feels like a friend.



were once used by pirates to hide their loot. Several caves offer the casual explorer easy access and interesting photo opportunities with age-old stalactites descending from the ceiling like pre-historic chandeliers.

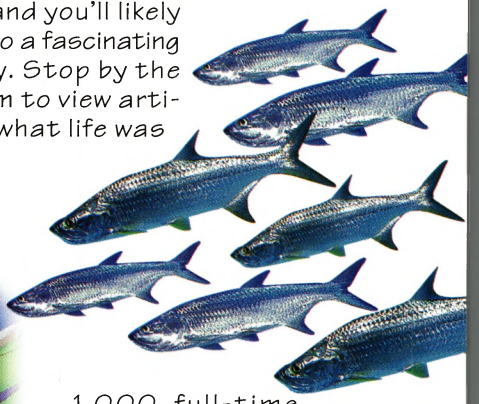
Perhaps one of the most enjoyable activities available in Cayman Brac is a leisurely bike-ride around the island. This is a perfect way to get to know the local residents, called "Brackers."



No crowds, except all the marine life...

Pause to say "hello" and you'll likely find yourself listening to a fascinating tale of island history. Stop by the Cayman Brac Museum to view artifacts that show you what life was like "in the old days."

With just more than



The diving is out of this world!



1,000 full-time residents, the only crowds you'll find in Cayman Brac are the schools of tarpon underwater. The calm, clear Caribbean waters surrounding "The Brac" run a balmy 78°F—84°F

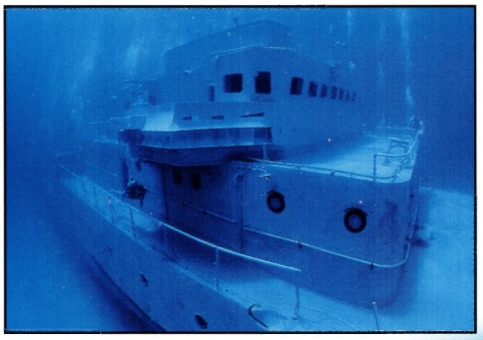




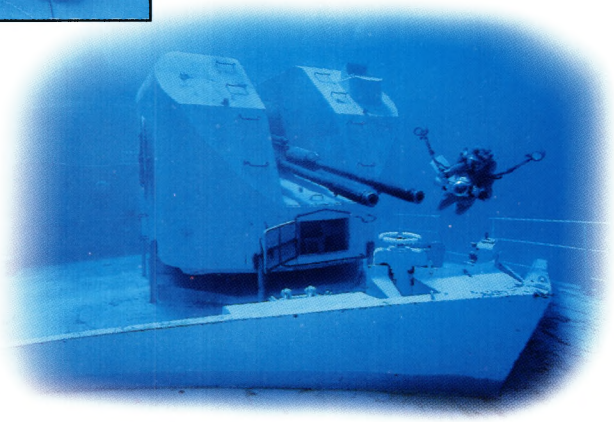
year-round. A lightweight dive suit is plenty to keep you comfortable on any of Cayman Brac's 40 moored dive sites spanning the north and south coasts. With only 3 dive operations visiting these sites, you'll feel like you're on your own private island.



Shipwreck of the Century!



While staying on Cayman Brac you'll have a chance to visit the only divable Russian warship in the Western Hemisphere. Just a 15 to 20 minute boat ride from most resorts, the 330 foot long Capt. Keith Tibbetts sits upright and completely intact in crystal clear water. Sunk in September, 1996, the wreck comes within 10 feet of the surface at three spots; her stern lies in 58 feet of water, her bow in 79. The gun turrets fore and aft, intended as instruments of destruction, are now a divers' playground.



The resort staff made us feel like royalty.



The host of accommodations on Cayman Brac offers everything from efficiency apartments and condos to full service, all-inclusive beachfront resorts. Whether you dream of relaxing in your own private villa, diving in warm, clear water that's loaded with friendly marine life or sipping a cool drink in a hammock under the palm trees, you'll be able to live your fantasy on Cayman Brac.



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TECHNIFACTS

(Continued from Page 26)

her sinking determined.

Crilley's and Laughlen's dives were remarkable considering the equipment available 80 years ago. For many years 306 feet remained a record depth for helmet equipment and compressed air. In the Navy, it may still be a record dive for the Mark V helmet rig on compressed air.

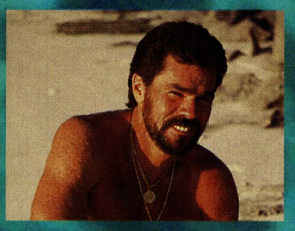
In helmet diving the volume and pressure of the air is of utmost importance. Primarily this is to prevent any buildup of CO_2 from the diver's exhaled breath. A steady supply of air at a pressure of at least 50 psi more than bottom pressure is considered mandatory. The volume of air must be more than 4.5 cfm at depth to provide adequate circulation through the helmet. In the salvage of the *F-4*, air compressors could not meet the diver's needs. Instead, the divers used high pressure air from torpedo air flasks. The propellers of some torpedoes are driven by a large volume of compressed air; some by steam and some by electric motors. In torpedoes driven by compressed air, about half the length of the torpedo is the compressed air flask. The *F-4* divers used the large volume of air stored in torpedo air flasks as their main source of air.

In 1963, a 20 inch effluent discharge pipeline was pulled into deep water off the Southern California coast. When the line was in place some diver work was needed to get the seaward end ready for effluent discharge. Depth recorder images showed the end of the pipe in 321 feet of water.

One of the divers was a veteran commercial diver Charles C. Isbell. Murray D. Black was the second diver. A third diver was also present. An underwater TV rig had been installed on the end of the pipe and Isbell watched the third diver on a topside TV screen. On the bottom this man landed beside the pipe. He was observed to almost immediately grasp a fitting and begin to sway back and forth. Inquiry over the intercom indicated he was having trouble with nitrogen narcosis. Isbell told the crew to pull the diver up and he was instructed to prepare to ascend. Almost immediately the diver floated off the bottom and began rising, faster and faster as depth decreased. He blew all the way to the surface and lay spread eagle and unconscious on the surface. He was immediately hauled to the dive platform and hoisted on board. His helmet and weights were quickly removed and he was placed in the hyperbaric chamber. Isbell went into the chamber with the stricken diver. When he had stabilized, Isbell locked out of the chamber

(Continued on Page 48)







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To date, we have completed refurbishing more than 50 rooms at Divi Flamingo. In addition, we have started the upgrade of Peter Hughes Dive Bonaire. We have already re-powered and rebuilt one boat and a second boat is soon to receive her new engines. This process is scheduled to continue throughout 1997. To further entice you, we are offering all divers the opportunity to experience our refurbished and upgraded product at a price so affordable even our competition is amazed.

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And between dives you can play tennis or volleyball, explore the island on a bike or moped, hike the bluff, swim in our protected lagoon or fresh water pool, fish, belly-up to the beach bar and enjoy a tropical cocktail, visit our PADI 5 STAR dive and photo centers, or you can simply relax in your choice of a beachside chaise lounge or hammock. The hardest choice you'll have to make is whether to leave our island on schedule or stay a few days to further experience our paradise!

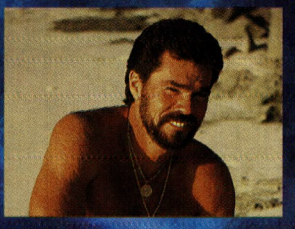
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Are you single? Be sure to ask about our discounted singles package.
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Cathy Church has added a second photo center and gallery on Grand Cayman. Now there's one in the Seven Mile Beach area as well as the one at Sunset House. The new gallery is upstairs at the Red Sail Sports Building at Coconut Place across from the Holiday Inn.

Meanwhile, Cathy's original Underwater Photo Centre and Gallery is still going strong at Sunset House, near George Town. This location is home to Cathy's week long Super Courses (she started teaching them on Grand Cayman in 1972) and the daily afternoon classes, which have been popular for many years.

The new gallery is delightful. It is crammed with hundreds of beautiful underwater photographs taken by Cathy and her husband, Herb Rafael. Many of these photographs have appeared in Cathy's numerous books and articles, while others are shown here for the first time. Spinner racks offer more than 50 images in the 8 by 10 inch format and the walls are covered with larger photographs ranging from 11 by 14 inch to a whopping 30 by 40 inches. All are printed on Fuji Super Hi Gloss paper for archival quality. Many are also available as refrigerator magnets.

The largest prints are awesome. The tiny schooling Silversides in the Grotto become life sized and you feel as though you are in the Grotto among them. The photos can be promptly shipped at no extra charge, with or without your choice of double mat and frame.

Cathy has just added 11 new prints to her South Pacific collection, including Kissing Clowns, Blue Christmas Tree (photographed on a stunning white coral) and her latest favorite, Cathy's Corals, a subtle pastel soft coral scene from Fiji.

Most of the regular photo center services are available at the new location. You can pick up and return underwater camera and video rentals (and view your videotape) at either center. Both locations offer Cathy's famous free mini-lesson and keep a complete stock of shirts, hats, film, batteries, books, camera lenses and accessories and even some wonderful gift items.

The Coconut Place center is open daily until 9:00 pm. The two locations and the late hours are especially convenient.

A special attraction at the Coconut Place location are the exquisite carvings of graceful sea creatures that Cathy brings back from her annual photography tours to the Solomon Islands. Made of such fine woods as ebony, each is signed and includes a photo of Cathy with the carver.

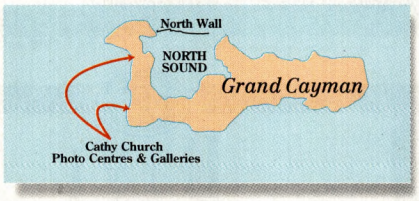
Most of Cathy's staff members are certified divers and photographers. If they don't have the answer, they know where to find Cathy. Except for Cathy's photo tours to the South Pacific twice a year, she and Herb are usually at one of the photo centers.

You can order photos, framed or unframed, or request a full color brochure of the Cathy Church Collection by calling (800) 934-3661. Or, write to Cathy Church Collection, 514 Chenango Street, Binghamton, NY 13901-2197.

For information about Cathy Church's other services, such as photo tours and courses, contact her directly on Grand Cayman at (809) 949-7415 or e-mail to cathy@cathychurch.com. You will find many of her images, as well as other information on her tours and courses, by checking out her Web Site at http://www.cathychurch.com.

Cathy Church's New Underwater Photo Centre and Gallery

Now There are Two on Grand Cayman





The new Photo Centre and Gallery at Red Sail Sports' Coconut Place is fully stocked with hundreds of beautiful U/W photographs.

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Come To Life

The Okeanos Aggressor

Coco Island Bound for High Voltage Diving





BY BONNIE J. CARDONE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY WAYNE HASSON

Coco Island, 250 miles off Costa Rica's Pacific Coast, is where advanced divers go when they want electrifying, once in a lifetime experiences. Coco is the playground of Marble Rays, Pilot Whales, False Killer Whales, Whale Sharks and Hammerheads. It's where schools of jacks and tuna are so large they block the sun, where the next creature that fins by might be a Marlin or a Sailfish.

Any dive destination featuring such large marine life, however, is a bit off the beaten path. After you leave Puntarenas, Costa Rica, you'll spend 36 hours at sea before reaching Coco Island. When you're going to spend so many hours cruising, you'll want to be comfortable. The *Okeanos Aggressor*, now in its eighth year of diving Coco, has just been completely refitted. There are 11 brand new staterooms, each with its own private head, vanity and shower. The rooms now have either a full sized lower bunk and an upper single or two single bunks.There are eight staterooms below decks, three on the upper deck.



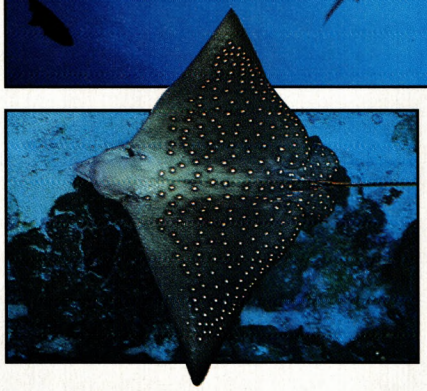
The rest of the *Okeanos Aggressor* is also like new and there are new services, such as nitrox and rebreather training and certification (through TDI). There are also rebreathers on board for guest use. Photographers, especially, will find this option attractive. Fewer bubbles increase the odds of getting closer to large marine life.

THE BOAT: Built in 1972, the120 foot long *Okeanos Aggressor* has a 24 foot beam. She cruises at 10 knots and has a 3,000 mile range. She can carry 8,500 gallons of fuel and 1,500 gallons of water. Her watermaker has a capacity of 3,000 gallons. This *Aggressor* is equipped with GPS, two radars, two VHF radios, two depth recorders, weather fax, single sideband radio, two hydraulic cranes, two inflatable dive dinghies, two 5,000 psi Mako compressors with a large cascade air storage system and, last but not least, a helicopter pad.

The dive deck has two freshwater showers. This is also where guests have their own personal gear lockers. Tanks are secured in racks above the lockers. Many *Okeanos Aggressor* guests are

(Continued on Page 142)





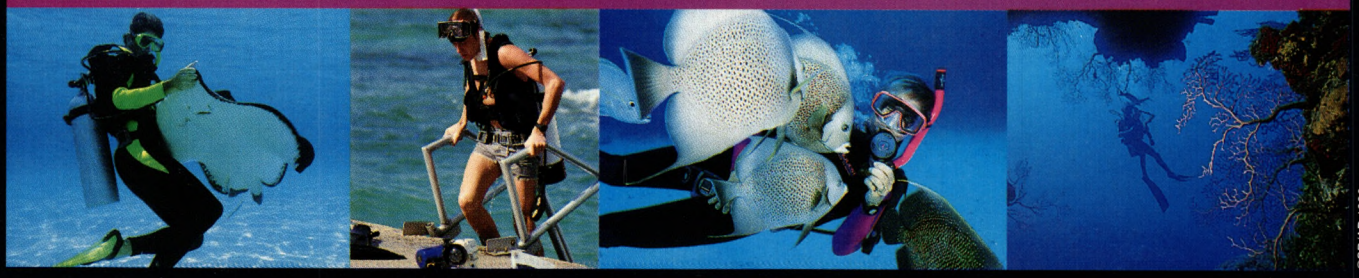
The *Okeanos Aggressor* (top) newly remodeled, is better than ever. She carries divers to remote Coco Island, where the marine life is large and abundant. Scalloped Hammerheads (this photo) are seen singly and in schools. Spotted Eagle Rays (below) are encountered less frequently.

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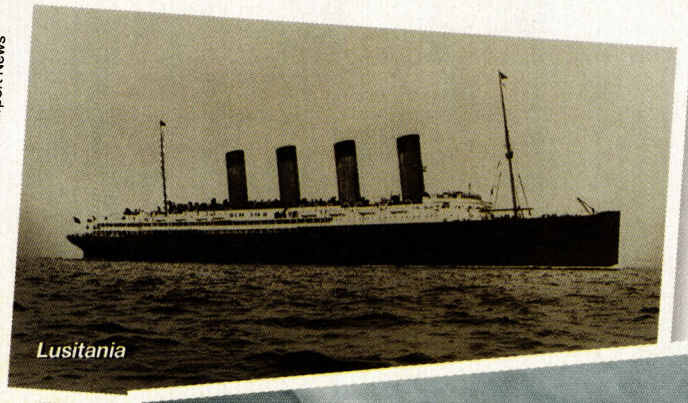
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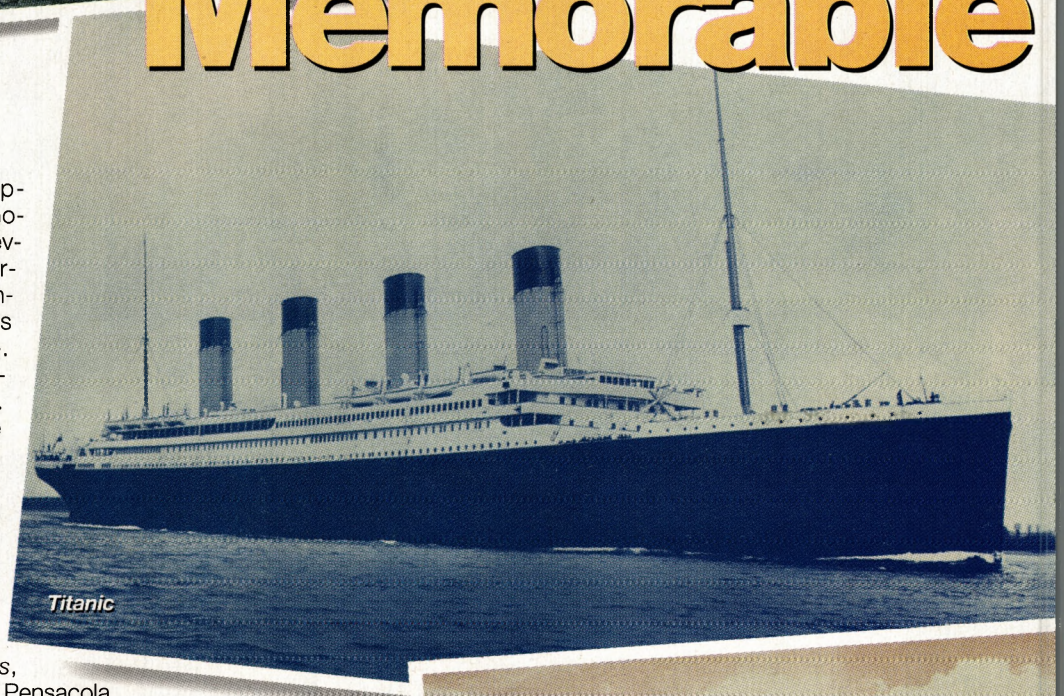


photos/courtesy Mariners' Museum, Newport News



The Fascinating Histories of 5 Maritime Disasters

Memorable



BY E.R. CROSS

An encounter with a shipwreck will arouse an emotional response from nearly everyone. For a diver, an underwater encounter will likely inspire deep, profound feelings that are difficult to analyze. Wreck exploration is comparable to mountain climbing. The higher and steeper the mountain the more difficult the assault to win the peak. The deeper and larger the wreck the more dive planning is needed to achieve successful penetration. A wreck dive may be an easy swim around the turret of the battleship *Massachusetts*, awash in the warm waters off Pensacola, Florida. It can also be a remotely operated, high technology exploration of the *Bismarck* in more than three miles of cold North Atlantic Ocean. The wreck must be explored because it is there.

For at least 9,000 years, watercraft of ancient and modern mariners have used the navigable waters of the world as thoroughfares. Casualty statistics tell us these waters have always been dangerous. Through the centuries, natural hazards combined with human error have led to more than one million shipwrecks.

Beginning about 100 years ago, nearly every ship disaster, regardless of size, was big news. This was owing mainly to the arrival of radio at sea and extends to today's almost instantaneous worldwide TV coverage. The full impact of each shipwreck has depended on the size of the vessel, the number of the crew and the fate of passengers. Also, the cargo, the cause of the disaster, the action of passengers and how the



photo/courtesy William H. Grazke, Jr.

crew responded added to the drama.

Except possibly for Noah's Ark there will likely be no agreement on the five best known and most memorable shipwrecks. Admittedly, many circumstances created and sustained a worldwide emotional response to the five we have chosen. All disasters had political implications, including some that affected diving and divers.

THE *MONITOR*

For 133 years, the rapidly corroding remains of the *Monitor* were lost to the world because of the environment in which she was resting. Soon after divers found the scattered, heavily corroded plates the vessel was again "lost." This time it was buried in bureaucratic red tape.

If you counted the heavy steel overhanging deck, the *Monitor* was only 172 feet long with a 41 foot beam. She was not very much of a warship but she was unusual. Barely one foot of hull floated above the water. On top of the hull was a circular revolving turret nine feet high and 20 feet in diameter. Two large cannons projected through opposite sides on the eight inch thick turret. Thick steel bars bolted together covered her sides and deck. She was launched March 8, 1862; the Civil War was not yet one year old. She was towed south from New York toward Chesapeake Bay and she came close to sinking twice during the voyage. It was evening when Captain J. L. Worden took a bearing on the southern tip of Cape Charles. He signaled the tug and the pilot to make a right turn. The *Monitor* headed into Chesapeake Bay toward the blockading Confederate fleet and into history.

It was night when the *Monitor* moored alongside the *Roanoke*. Captain Worden reported to his squadron commander and received orders to engage the Confederate ironclad *Virginian*, popularly still known by her previous name, *Merrimack*. On Sunday morning, March 9, the two vessels approached each other. Thousands of sightseers lined the shores and the decks of nearby vessels to witness the engagement. When the vessels were less than a mile apart a gunnery duel began that changed naval history forever. Even when the hulls were alongside, scraping together, cannon shot bounced off the ironclad hulls. Both vessels suffered minor damage. Steel fragments injured Captain Worden. He turned command over to executive officer Greene. While this was being done, the *Monitor* ran aground. The *Merrimack*, nearly out of ammunition and leaking from damage suffered previously, thought she had defeated the *Monitor*. At 12:30 pm she headed for the Navy Yard for protection and repair. Both sides eventually claimed victory.

Shipwrecks

Later, on May 8, the *Monitor* returned and shelled the fort at Sewell's Point. In December 1862, she was again under tow in heavy seas. As usual, she was taking on a great deal of water. Finally, she sank some 20 miles off Cape Hatteras in 230 feet of water with a loss of four officers and 12 crew.

Divers located the wreckage of the *Monitor* in 1973. Soon after, in January 1974, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) declared the site a Marine Sanctuary. Now the battle for the *Monitor* began. A few politically correct divers were deemed qualified to dive the rusted remains. Considered not qualified were those who had made dozens of dives to locate and identify the vessel. The favored few had several articles published and produced a commercial video. Other divers took up the fight to gain permission to dive the wreck. Recently, qualified divers were allowed, by permit, to dive the remnants. The battle for the *Monitor* may have just begun.


Andrea Doria

THE *TITANIC*

The sinking of the *Titanic* is considered the world's greatest maritime disaster. With a length of 882 feet and a displacement of nearly 66,000 tons she was the largest and most opulent vessel of her time.

Great pomp and ceremony, and an equal amount of publicity, surrounded the launching of the *Titanic* on May 31, 1911. Not quite one year later, on April 10, 1912, she sailed for New York on her maiden and only voyage. The vessel struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic just before midnight on April 14. This "unsinkable vessel" sank a few hours later on April 15, 1912, in water more than 13,000 feet deep. More than 1,500 people died when she sank. Among the many wealthy passengers who died were 10 American millionaires, including Colonel John Jacob Aster and Benjamin Guggenheim.

After a two month search in the summer of 1985, a joint U.S. and French team located the *Titanic*. Reports of survivors indicated the *Titanic* started to break up as she sank. The search team found she had landed on the bottom in two major pieces and left a large field of debris, including tons of coal. Surprisingly, all the pieces of the giant hull sit upright.

A joint expedition visited the *Titanic* again in 1986. In 1987, there was at least one other expedition, this one by a French team that salvaged a large number of relics from the debris field and the vessel.

The shattered, badly corroded hulk of the *Titanic* was never a monument to the dead. Long ago they became part of the sea and its creatures. All who live on realize the real inheritance from the *Titanic* tragedy is the improvements in safety at sea for all vessels, crew and passengers; including divers.

THE *LUSITANIA*

Ads in New York papers and direct contact warned many passengers and crew that the *Lusitania* might be sunk while in the war zone. The lure of the lovely *Lusitania*, however, was all powerful. There were nearly 2,000 souls on board when she sailed on her crossing to destruction.

She arrived in New York on her maiden voyage on September 7, 1907. She left New York on her fatal voyage on May Day in 1915. Between those fateful days she made more than 200 Atlantic crossings. Like the *Titanic* the *Lusitania* was big and fast. She could set a course and cruise at a steady 21 knots for days. In 1915, a state of war existed between England and Germany. The United States remained neutral although most Americans were partial to England and her allies.

The consensus of passengers and crew was that, at a speed of 21 knots, no German submarine could overtake this palatial vessel. Also, there would be many American passengers on board. The feeling was that Germany would not dare risk the lives of Americans by sinking a vessel

(Continued on Page 66)

Pioneer's

SeaLife Reefmaster

Super Easy Underwater Snapshots

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

The undersea world is so exciting that, sooner or later, many divers want to share it with friends and loved ones via photographs. Lots of us go into this in a big way, becoming hardcore U/W photographers with extensive, expensive equipment. If all you want to do, however, is take snapshots now and again, the SeaLife Reefmaster may be the answer.

The SeaLife Reefmaster is a compact 35mm camera with its own waterproof housing. Along with everything you need to prepare and use it, the camera and housing fit neatly into a super sturdy, bright yellow 10¾ by 9¾ by 5 inch air and water-tight resin case. Cradled by the custom cut foam inside, the camera and housing are ready to go anywhere you go. The price for all this is just $199.



Top right: Cat Holloway and the SeaLife Reefmaster, a 35mm camera with its own housing. The Whitetip Reef Shark (above left) was photographed with this camera system at Fiji's E-6 Cathedral.

The system is not only compact and affordable, it's also super easy to use. It comes with an illustrated booklet that tells clearly and concisely exactly how to set it up and use it.

SEALIFE REEFMASTER CAMERA: Just 4½ inches long, 1½ inches wide and 2⅝ inches tall, the camera has a minimum of controls: on/off switch, shutter release, film rewind and flash override. It is powered by two AA alkaline batteries, widely available in grocery and drug stores. Loading film and changing the batteries—exceptionally simple tasks—are the hardest things you'll have to do. When in the housing, the camera's flash is always on and the film advances automatically after the shutter is released.

SEALIFE REEFMASTER HOUSING: Only slightly larger than the camera, the water resistant housing is clear Lexan with a protective yellow rubber coating. The two parts are held together by two stainless steel latches and sealed with an O-ring. The housing comes with a wrist lanyard and a sports finder (to help frame the photos). On the outside there's an on/off dial and a shutter release. Clear ports allow you to see the frame counter, the green flash ready light and the cam-

(Continued on Page 50)

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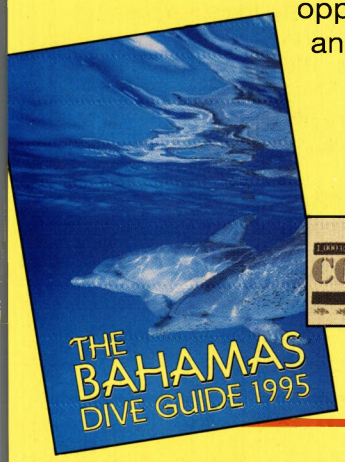


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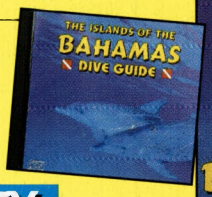
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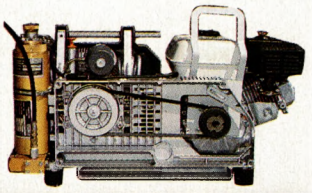
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Bauer Utilus-10G Portable Compressor

Become a Go Anywhere Diver with this Portable Powerhouse



BY TY SAWYER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J.CARDONE



Inset: With the Utilus-10G V-belt cover removed, it is easy to exchange or remove an engine via a hinged motor plate. Above: Using the recoil starter.

Extended scuba explorations while camping or boating in a remote area are rather difficult without a portable air source. If you want the freedom to dive as much as you desire wherever you may be, then you would do well to look into the Bauer Utilus-10G. This compact, ultra reliable compressor can fill a tank with pure air in less than 20 minutes, anywhere. Unlimited air and complete independence is no problem with this personal, portable powerhouse.

PORTABILITY AND USABILITY

The Utilus-10G is 30 inches long, 14 inches wide and 20 inches tall. It weighs only 97 pounds fully assembled and can be separated into two parts, each with its own handle, for ease of carrying and storage. Its compact size makes it very travel friendly. It fits nicely into most car trunks or tucks tidily away into an out of the way place on a boat.

The Utilus-10G pumps 4.3 cubic feet per minute, filling an 80 cubic foot tank from 500 to 3,000 psi in a mere 19 minutes.

For convenient tank positioning, there is a six foot long, 3/16 inch, 5,000 psi rated Parflex high pressure filler hose with a chrome plated, forged brass yoke rated to 4,000 psi (the intermediary line valve is rated to 6,000 psi for extra safety). To monitor airfills, there is a large faced 5,000 psi pressure gauge. But, if you are in the middle of a tall tale or are otherwise distracted during the airfill, all three compressor stages are protected by overpressure relief valves (first stage: 116 psi; second stage: 1,150 psi; third stage: 3,200 psi) to prevent accident or damage. In fact, this compressor features a number of failsafes and safety valves, described in detail in the manual. Conversely, there is a pressure maintaining valve that automatically closes an outlet in order to prevent pressure inside the air filter from dropping below 2,000 psi. This ensures the filter will remain contaminant and moisture free.

AIR FILTRATION SYSTEM

Since an air compressor is an underwater life support system, the tolerance for deviation in air quality is virtually nil. Thus, the filtration system has to work perfectly, with a dependability you don't

(Continued on Page 126)

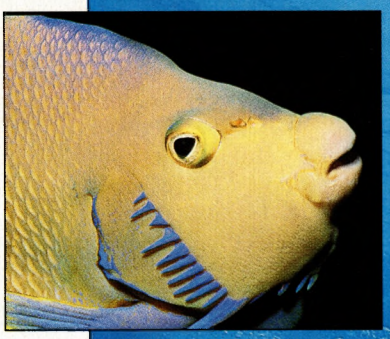
Dream Dive Tour of the Florida Keys



The Florida Keys are the world's most accessible tropical dive paradise. The ability to simply drive down U.S. Highway 1 and enter a world of quality scuba options without the hassle of customs and immigration, exchanging currency or learning a new language has obvious appeal to millions of visitors annually. As seen from the air, the 200 islands of the Florida Keys appear as emeralds scattered across a turquoise sea.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY STEPHEN FRINK

ADVERTISEMENT







The island chain arcs gently to the southwest at the end of the Florida Peninsula but only 30 of these islands are connected by the bridges and roadway of the Overseas Highway.

The sheer size and diversity of this popular dive destination create some confusion in terms of where to stay and where to dive, if only because of the bewildering array of fine choices. Many people have only one week of vacation time to spend in the Keys and they naturally want to pack the most diving into the fewest days. Most opt for a single resort and a single dive operator. This allows visitors to immerse themselves in the best that location has to offer. Yet, there are others whose sense of adventure requires them to see as much as possible and experience the greatest variety imaginable. For this type of diver, I propose the Florida Keys Dream Dive Tour. This is a hypothetical holiday, of course, but it does give a sense of what might be done if divers drove south to the Keys, either in their own cars or in rental cars after arriving at Miami International by air.

SATURDAY: It's about an hour's drive from the Miami airport to the northernmost island in the chain, Key Largo. A simple glance at the skyline dotted with red and white divers down flags will reveal this is a serious dive destination. Note that most addresses in the Florida Keys relate to a Mile Marker number, with zero at Key West and about 112 at the line separating Monroe County (the Keys) from Dade County (Miami). The entrance to the terrestrial aspect of John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park is at Mile Marker 102.5 but the appeal of this 36 year old marine preserve is offshore, from the coast to the three mile limit. Here are the mangrove system and shallow reefs that provide a marine nursery to replenish one of the world's richest ecosystems.

The Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary begins at the three mile boundary and runs to the 200 foot depth contour, collectively providing more than 200 square miles of marine preserve. There are dozens of terrific dive sites along the 26 miles of spur and groove fringing reef found four to six miles offshore but a good place to start is **Molasses Reef**. Here are high profile coral heads in a spur and groove formation, consistently clear water and more marine life than is found almost anywhere in this hemisphere. There are more than a score of buoyed dive sites along this reef but one of my favorite areas is **Fire Coral Caves**, where schools of Bluestriped and Smallmouth Grunts decorate the top of the coral ridge and Atlantic Spadefish and Copper Sweepers populate the swim-through caverns and ledges. A second dive could be on the ***Benwood*** shipwreck, a hapless victim of World War II that now rests in just 25 to 45 feet of water. Her twisted and scattered wreckage provides a remarkable refuge for massive schools of goatfish, grunts and Porkfish.

SUNDAY: Most dive operators in the Florida Keys offer two tank dive excursions to optimize the best diving found four to six miles offshore. A good way to spend Sunday morning might be with a dive on the **Christ of the Abyss** statue at **Key Largo Dry Rocks**. This nine foot tall bronze statue of Christ, considered the symbol of Pennekamp Park, was sculpted with outstretched arms as if beckoning divers and snorkelers to this wondrous underwater world. However, the coral reef in this area is equally interesting, especially in the shallow areas rich with forests of surprisingly pristine Elkhorn Coral. A second dive might be at **The Elbow**, an area noted for its clear water and interesting combination of reef and wrecks. Another good choice would be the ***City of Washington*** wreck, where local dive operators have long handfed Barracuda and moray eels, making them tame photo subjects.

MONDAY: By the third day many divers will be ready to tackle something a little different than the typical 35 foot deep coral reef and would enjoy a thrilling wreck dive such as the ***Eagle***, off Islamorada. This 287 foot freighter was purchased by the local dive and business community to be sunk as an artificial reef. She went down on December 19, 1985, in 110 feet of water, settling on her starboard side. In her decade of immersion, the *Eagle* has acquired a colorful cloak of encrusting sponges and corals, while her holds are filled with Tomtate and Sardines. **Davis Reef** is a perfect second dive, not only because its 25 foot depth is a safe counterpart to the deeper multi-level profile of the *Eagle* but because it is so rich with marine life. Here Schoolmasters and goatfish intermingle with the ubiquitous grunts in clusters so thick the reef is nearly obscured. Nurse Sharks are found beneath the coral ledges and Green Morays make willing photographic subjects.

TUESDAY: Continuing south brings one of the Keys' most popular dive destinations, Marathon. This is the home of the

Thunderbolt, a fascinating complement to the extensive portfolio of exciting Florida Keys wreck dives. The *Thunderbolt* is a 188 foot ship, once used as a cable layer and later converted to a research ship. The local dive community purchased her for use as an artificial reef and sank her in March 1986, in 115 feet of water. The *Thunderbolt* now sits upright with large angelfish patrolling her decks and Barracuda standing watch in the wheelhouse.

There are plenty of quality shallow reef dives off Marathon but I especially like **Coffin's Patch**. Here a series of six reef structures in 15 to 28 feet of water are typified by a dominant species of hard coral. In one area, majestic Elkhorn Corals invite exploration by both scuba divers and snorkelers. In another area, robust Pillar Corals extend their polyps in their usual daytime feeding ritual. And through it all, a diverse population of reef tropicals hides amid the coral canyons.

WEDNESDAY: No trip to the Florida Keys would be complete without a visit to the stunning Looe Key National Marine



Sanctuary off the Lower Keys. Established as a National Marine Sanctuary in 1981, the Looe Key reef is just 5.3 nautical miles square but, amid this underwater paradise is a virtually complete reef ecosystem. Long protected against the predation of spearfishing and lobstering, marine life abounds. The **Fore Reef** offers traditional Keys' spur and groove coral formations with deep sand surge channels running to seaward and high profile coral canyons rising to within 10 feet of the surface. There are seagrass meadows here as well as an intermediate and deep reef especially popular among visiting scuba divers. This jewel in the crown of the National Marine Sanctuary program certainly merits at least a two tank dive. Surely it will leave you wishing for more time and more dives.

THURSDAY: Key West is the most historically interesting of the Florida Keys and offers the greatest tourist infrastructure. Although best known for great beaches, wonderful resort hotels, restaurants and a wide variety of shopping options, the dive opportunities off this southernmost isle will likely surprise and delight. At the ***Cayman Salvager***, a ship intentionally sunk in April 1985, a 500 pound Jewfish is occasionally sighted taking refuge in the holds of this 180 foot steel hulled buoy tender. Green Morays are likewise found here and Amberjacks and Barracuda commonly parade along the outer decks. After a 100 foot dive on the *Salvager*, the lovely shallow spur and groove formations of **Nine Foot Stake** permit divers to leisurely observe individual reef tropicals, as well as schools of grunts and Blue Tangs amid pristine brain and star corals.

FRIDAY: On this last day of your dive holiday, it might be best to explore the areas of the Keys you most enjoyed earlier in the week. Maybe you'd like to stay in Key West to dive the wreck of **Joe's Tug** and a shallow reef along the **Western Sambos**. **Looe Key** would definitely deserve an extended visit and, off Marathon, there are fascinating dives such as **Sombrero Reef** and the **Duck Key Wreck**. Re-visiting Islamorada would allow time to dive the drop-off known as **Conch Wall** or even the Aquarius underwater research habitat that now attracts schooling fish and Barracuda as if it were an artificial reef. And, of course, a visit to Key Largo can offer amazing shipwrecks such as the U.S. Coast Guard cutters ***Bibb*** and ***Duane***, as well as the ***Spiegel Grove***, a 510 foot ship scheduled to be sunk in 110 feet of water early this month.

The Florida Keys are easily accessible via automobile of course, but those who prefer to fly will do well to choose **AMERICAN AIRLINES**, *Something Special to the Florida Keys*, to Miami with connecting flights on **AMERICAN EAGLE** to Marathon or Key West. For reservations, call (800) 433-7300. Please visit our Web Site at **HTTP:/WWW.FLA-KEYS.COM** or call **(800) FLA-KEYS** for more information.



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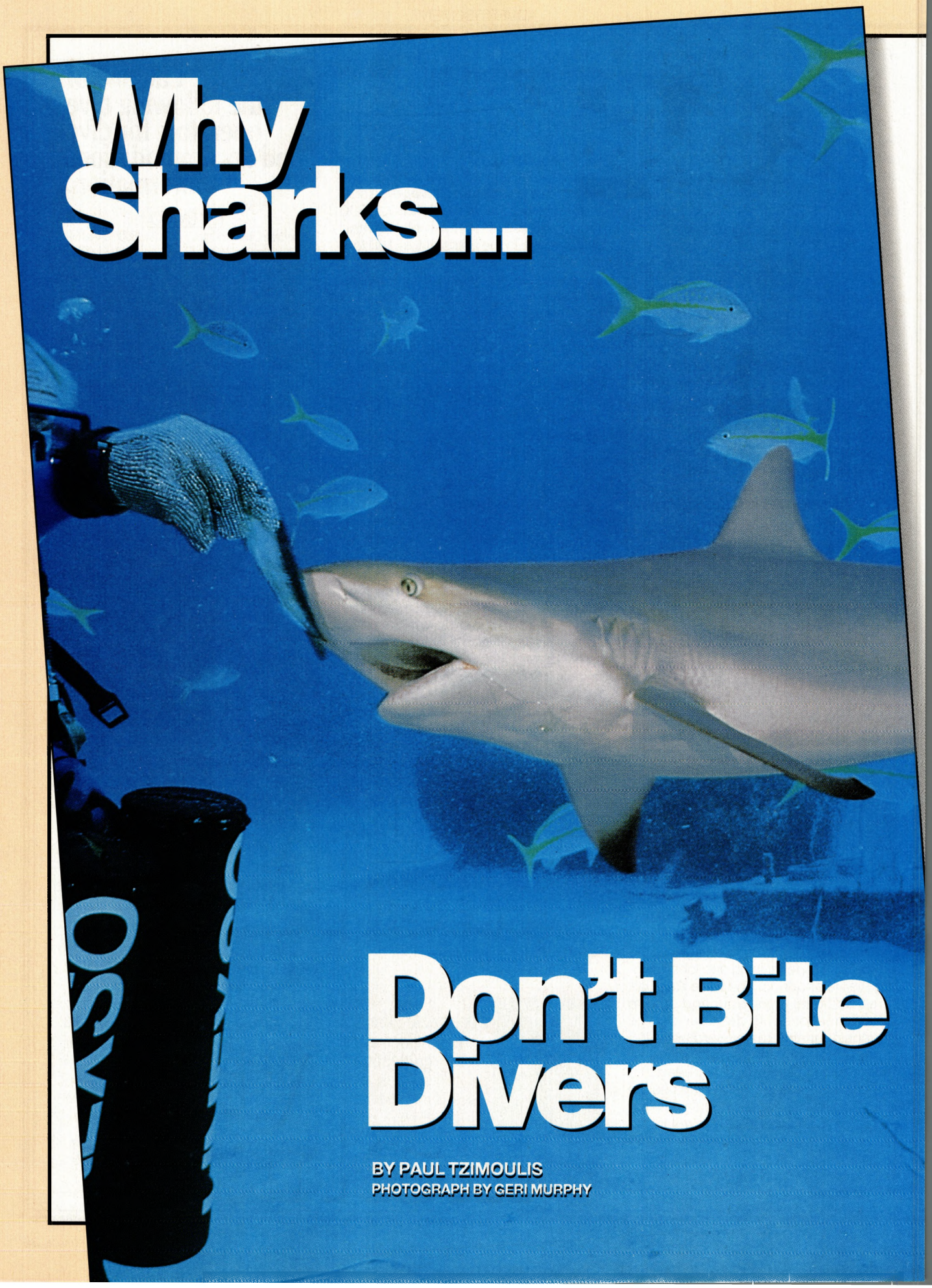
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Why Sharks...



Don't Bite Divers

BY PAUL TZIMOULIS
PHOTOGRAPH BY GERI MURPHY

Each year an estimated 200,000 divers intentionally enter the water to swim with sharks. The majority of these people have neither a death wish nor any special training or talent for shark combat. Quite the contrary, they are average, normal people who represent the full spectrum of our society. Their ranks are comprised of doctors, accountants, housewives, dentists, secretaries, honeymoon couples, grandmothers and many other people you would not ordinarily envision as risk-takers.

To those unacquainted with diving or shark diving, the most often heard question is "Don't you worry about getting bitten?" The answer is "No." And, there are some very good reasons why.

SHARK OVERVIEW

To understand why sharks don't bite divers, you must first understand the big picture of the shark world. There are presently 331 documented species of sharks—far more diversity than upright, walking bipeds (that's us humans).

This immense diversity of species would lead you to the logical conclusion that not all sharks are the same—and you would be right. There are big sharks, tiny sharks, sharks exclusive to certain regions, sharks with different diets and sharks with distinct behavior characteristics.

The basic reason divers are not bitten by sharks is that divers possess knowledge—the ability to recognize individual species, interpret their behavior and understand what to do.

It's a little bit like learning to drive an automobile safely. The first rule you are taught is to stay on your side of the road (right hand lane in the U.S.) because driving head on into oncoming traffic could be detrimental to your health. Armed with this important bit of knowledge, driving an automobile can be almost as safe as shark diving.

To better understand shark diversity, let's examine a few of the basic shark groups.

SHARKS THAT CANNOT BITE

There are actually sharks that cannot bite divers because they have no teeth. Ironically, these non-biting sharks turn out to be the largest members of the shark kingdom—the Whale Shark and the Basking Shark. Both species are mammoth (40 to 60 feet long) and plankton eaters. Their diet consists of tiny creatures suspended in the water in huge clouds. These giant sharks have mouths the size of a garage door and open them wide to gulp thousands of gallons of water, filtering out the tiny plankton while expelling the water through their gills. In other words, these giant sharks have no teeth and are incapable of biting anything. They are as docile as butterflies.

On the other hand, the Whale Shark is one of the superstars of shark diving. Despite its size, this great fish has a very mellow disposition. It often allows divers to swim alongside or hang on to its giant dorsal fin. The Whale Shark appears curious and will often approach a dive boat just to see what is going on.

SHARKS THAT WILL NOT BITE

There are certain times and certain species of sharks that appear totally disinterested in biting anything. A good example of this phenomenon is the schooling Hammerheads seen at Coco Island, the Northern Galapagos, Malpelo Island and in Mexico's Sea of Cortez.

No one is quite sure why Hammerhead Sharks form giant schools and swim together for such long periods. It could be a mating ritual or social interaction or both. The point is that these large Hammerhead schools are totally disinterested in feeding. Divers can swim among them—and have, for decades—in total safety.

> "What few people realize is that sharks possess a level of intelligence that could be compared to that of a dog or cat."

There are other species of sharks that seem to be controlled by time cycles. A number of shark species are night feeders. When encountered during the day, these sharks pose no threat because their feeding mode is switched off.

SHARKS THAT BITE

There are, of course, many species of sharks capable of biting and they will bite in very specific situations. The most important factor here is that sharks will generally give you warning before attempting to bite. Divers learn how to read this body language and know exactly how to deal with the situation.

Identification of the shark species and knowledge about their body language are the keys to staying out of trouble. Sharks generally attack for very specific reasons—defense of their territories, defense of chosen mates, harassment or abuse, spearfishing situations and so on. Recognizing the situation and taking appropriate measures is not as difficult as it might sound.

WHAT SHARKS REALLY WANT

If there are sharks that can bite (and we all know there are), how is it that divers can go into the water and actually feed these sharks without being bitten? Shark feeding dives are conducted every day of the year, with more than 100,000 divers observing this incredible activity at very close range. Quite often the sharks buzz in between and over the heads of the divers who are watching. How is that possible?

Quite simply, the sharks have no interest in the divers—they are after the food. Most sharks have a fairly specific normal diet. They love chunks of fish or whole fish that are fairly small. When confronted by a diver or a chunk of fish, the shark will always go for the fish.

Any contact between the shark and the diver is purely accidental and the result of a clumsy pursuit for the food. On many occasions, I have seen sharks bump into divers as they race for the fish—desperately trying to capture the food before another shark gets it. Was the diver hurt in any way? No, but you can say it is quite a thrill!

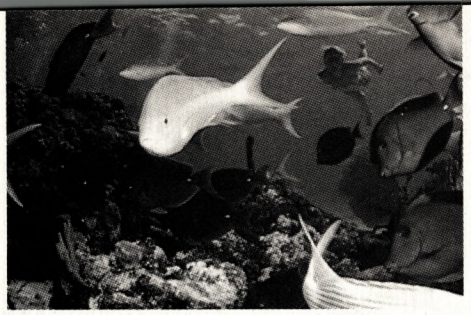
What few people realize is that sharks possess a level of intelligence that could be compared to that of a dog or cat. Yes, they are trainable. Sharks often recognize the divemasters who feed them on a daily basis. When the feeding session begins, the sharks, like excited puppies, will focus their attention on the feeder and his/her body language.

In other words, the diver who controls the food also controls the action of the sharks. The feeders can raise the tempo and intensity of the shark feeding session by offering more food or they can reduce the tempo to absolute calm, casual shark cruising by withholding the food.

Even when you are in the middle of one of these shark feeding sessions, it is always amazing to realize that the sharks are intelligent enough to know the difference between humans and the shark food.

Based on the one million or more encounters between sharks and divers, we can say that, under normal circumstances, sharks don't bite divers.

It has only been in the last ten years that we have begun to understand and appreciate these beautiful creatures. At this point there are still more questions, and surprises, than there are answers. One thing we have learned is that sharks and humans can coexist in the sea.





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Bay Islands–
Stan Waterman

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Belize–
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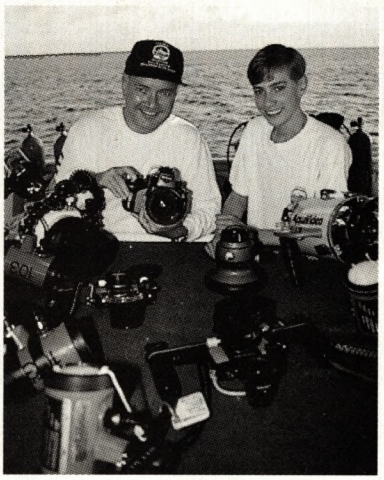
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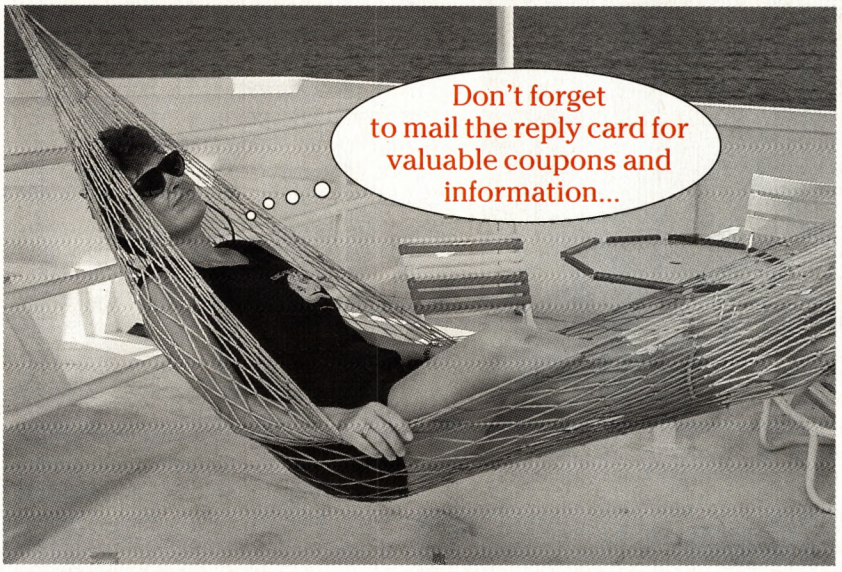
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Sea Eye Diving



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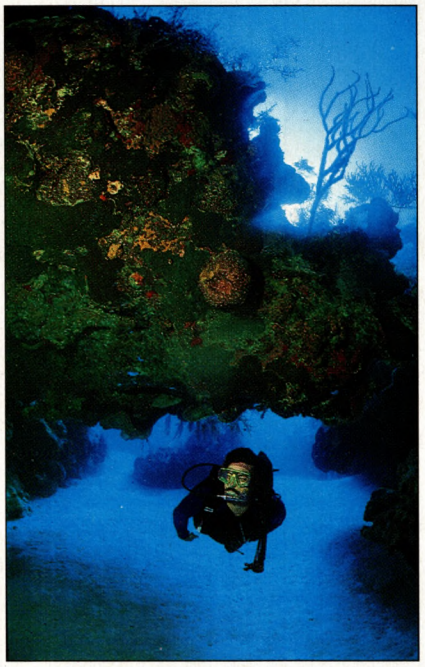
TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN

Grand Turk is probably not how you imagine it—it's much better. A small island, about seven miles long, it features long white beaches, sunny blue skies, smooth, clear water and vertical walls packed with living coral. It also has great people, such as Cecil Ingham and Connie Rus at Sea Eye Diving. Best of all, though, Grand Turk has time. Hours and hours of it not committed to anything in particular.

Cecil and Connie have owned and operated Sea Eye Diving for nine years. A Grand Turk native, Cecil trained each of the divemasters, also from the island. As a group they are uniquely qualified to show you the delights of the Grand Turk wall and shallow reefs. Sea Eye Diving's high percentage of repeat customers is a testimony to the fun people have diving there. Sea Eye Diving is a full service facility, with PADI instruction available from resort to divemaster and warm water specialty courses. A full selection of rental dive gear is on hand and U/W cameras can also be rented. E-6 slide processing is available.

The Sea Eye style of diving is perfect for Grand Turk. Small boats are used to avoid crowding and for easy loading from the beach. The boats are backed into ankle deep water and you just step aboard. The divemasters set up your gear while you sit in the shade of the Bimini top for the entire three or four minutes it takes to get to the dive site. Water entry is via an easy backroll and a big three-step ladder makes exiting a snap. Computer divers can set their own profiles but guides are also available. The surface interval is normally spent back on the beach.

The Sea Eye dive packages include airport transfers, government bed tax, a welcome cocktail, two morning dives a day, unlimited beach diving, tanks, weights and weightbelts. Afternoon boat dives and night dives can be arranged for a small extra fee. Another option that shouldn't be missed is the afternoon snorkel and barbecue trip to Gibbs Cay. This uninhabited nature reserve has one of the world's best beaches. The outing also features Smitty's famous conch salad. Smitty, the Sea Eye divemaster, dives for the conch himself and prepares it fresh right on the beach.



Top: Horses run past Guanahani Beach Resort. Above: A swim-through at McDonald's Arch. Below: Divers step aboard Sea Eye boats from the beach.



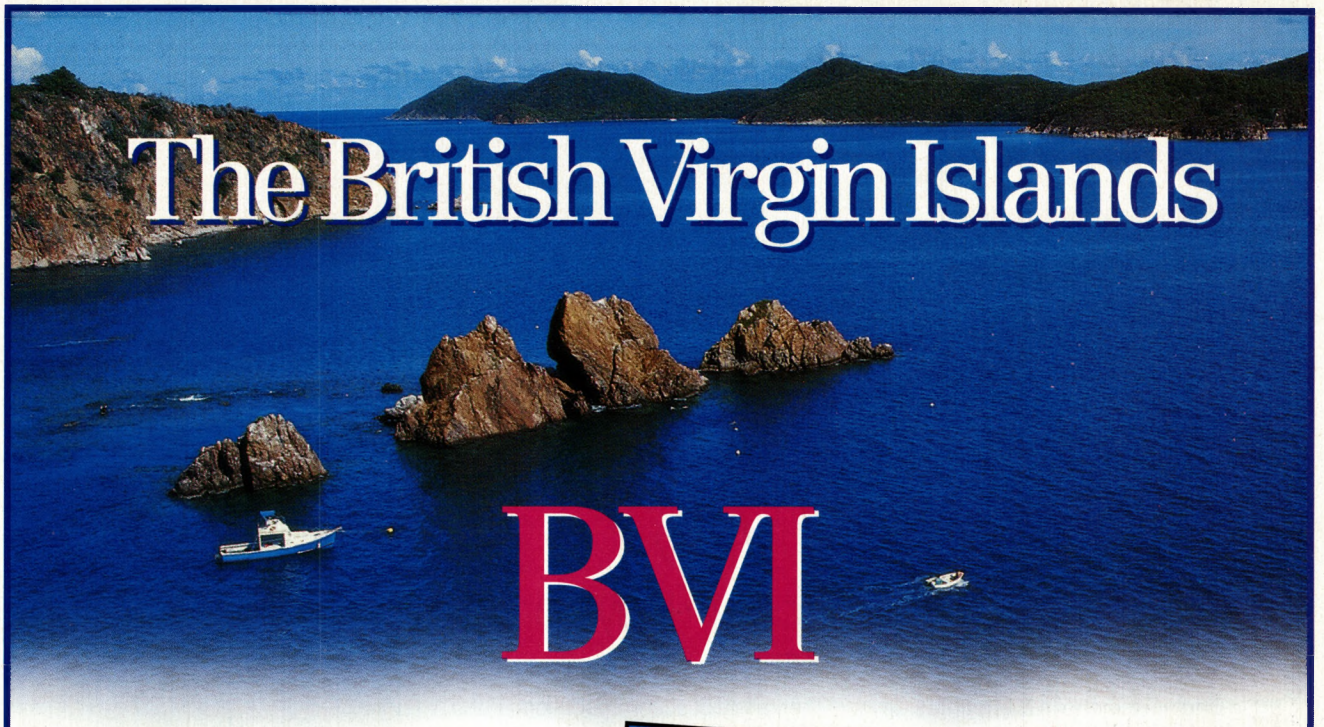


Diving is superb in Grand Turk. The spectacular wall gets the most attention. Dropping from about 40 feet to what might as well be infinity, it is covered with corals and sponges and crowded with fish. Arches and ravines make the topography interesting, along with deep overhangs packed with delicate Black Corals. Don't neglect the vibrant shallow reefs on top of the wall, though. Running along the gentle slope between 25 and 45 feet, these reefs are wonderful.

A wide variety of accommodations are available with the Sea Eye dive packages. Guanahani Beach Resort, for instance, is a 16 room resort right on the beach with a pool, restaurant and great room. All of the rooms have an ocean view, air-conditioning and cable TV. Sitting Pretty is another beachfront hotel with 24 rooms. Sixteen of them have kitchens and all of the second floor rooms have vaulted wooden ceilings. Like the Guanahani, air-conditioning, pool and TV are included. The Water's Edge Townhomes are the most upscale accommodations on Grand Turk. This is a three unit building on a beautiful westside beach. Each townhome has two stories, with two bedrooms, two baths, living room, dining room and kitchen. Fully furnished, the townhomes also include washers and dryers.

American Airlines has two nonstop flights each day from Miami to Providenciales. After clearing customs, just walk to the domestic side of the terminal and catch one of the inter-island commuters to Grand Turk. The trip is a pleasant one-half hour. U.S. citizens can use either a passport or a certified birth certificate and photo ID. Dress is casual, dollars are the official currency and the electricity is 110 volts.

For more information on diving and accommodations, contact Grand Turk Hotels at (800) 577-3872. Outside the U.S., call (809) 946-2666 or fax (809) 946-2668. You can also call Dive Grand Turk at (809) 946-1408 or write P.O. Box 156, Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos Islands, BWI. The e-mail address for Sea Eye Diving is GTHotels@caribsurf.com.



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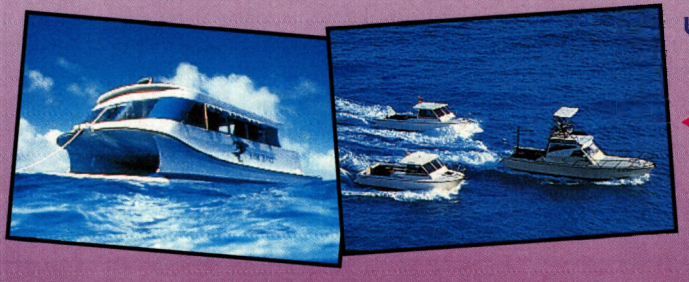
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This photo: The 31 foot *Silent World III*. Below: The professional and highly knowledgeable staff of Silent World Dive Center.

Silent World

Personalized Dive Services in Key Largo

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHIRLEY VANDERBILT

Finding your niche is sometimes as simple as doing what you do best. And, Silent World Dive Center does just that. In Key Largo, at the northern end of the Florida Keys, this successful dive operation has an established tradition of catering to small groups while providing quality, highly personalized service. Its unique, intimate approach, utilizing smaller boats and an average of 10 to 15 passengers per trip, allows guests to enjoy a quiet, relaxing dive experience without the crowds. And, what better place to enjoy this freedom than in the picturesque and charming Florida Keys!

Key Largo is home to John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park and the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary, a massive preserve covering more than 188 square miles and extending 8.5 miles into the warm Atlantic waters. Teeming with marine life and historic wrecks, the offshore reefs provide a level of diving rivaling many Caribbean hot spots. A typical dive here may encounters with Green Moray Eels, Nurse Sharks, Spiny Lobsters, Atlantic Stingrays, curious Barracuda and thousands of schooling fish, all against a backdrop of colorful corals and sponges. Add to this the occasional sightings of Bull and Blacktip Sharks, Spotted Eagle Rays, squid, octopus, exotic nudibranchs and more and you have all the makings of an exciting U/W vacation. Topside you'll enjoy the delightful, tropical Florida weather, casual island ambiance and the convenience of a well established tourist infrastructure. From Key Largo to Key West, the islands offer a cornucopia of sightseeing attractions and natural wonders, such as mangrove estuaries, bird hatcheries and habitat for the rare and diminutive Keys deer.

The variety of accommodations in the Key Largo area ranges from luxury waterfront resorts to economy motels with that special laidback Keys charm. Through Silent World's personalized reservations service you can book a dive package geared toward your individual needs, taking advantage of seasonal prices and discounted rates for extended stays. The staff also offers recommendations on local eateries and activities. Families will find an abundance of watersports in the area, including snorkeling and SNUBA for non-divers. Anyone eight years or older may participate in SNUBA, a special underwater tour conducted with a surface supplied air source. And, snorkelers are always welcome at Silent World. Many of the best dives in the Keys are shallow reefs 15 to 25 feet deep, completely accessible to swimmers and snorkelers. For this reason, the Keys have become a popular vacation spot where an entire family can share the fun and excitement of the reef experience.

Silent World offers daily two tank dive trips, with departures at 9:00 am and 1:00 pm. Night dives may be booked with as few as four divers and every attempt is made to accommodate special requests. Silent World's boats dock just minutes from the shop, along a canal with quick access to the ocean. The *Silent World III* is a compact 31 foot aluminum hulled catamaran with a wide 13 foot beam and a full complement of custom made dive amenities. Both the *Silent World III* and the smaller 25 foot *Silent World II* provide divers with fresh water, coolers, camera dip tank and plenty of space for gear. The size of the boats makes them perfect for private charters.

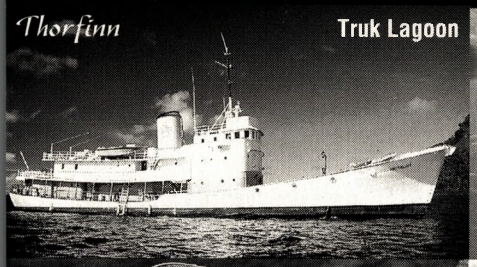
The shop's certified dive instructors



are available for training from resort and open water to divemaster. You may also opt for a variety of specialties, such as wreck diving on the famous 120 foot ***Duane***, just outside the sanctuary. As an advanced dive, this location offers a challenge to divers, both because of depth and frequent strong currents. Heavily encrusted with growth, the ship attracts an abundance of marine life and provides great photographic opportunities. Even if you don't own photographic equipment, you may still capture memories of your adventure with Silent World's rental cameras (Sea & Sea or Canon). Rental includes film and the cameras are all set up and ready for use. Silent World carries a full line of rental scuba gear from Oceanic, as well as fully stocked retail sales of this prestigious brand. As a full service facility, Silent World also offers T-shirt, gift and accessory sales, equipment repair and comfortable classroom space for instruction.

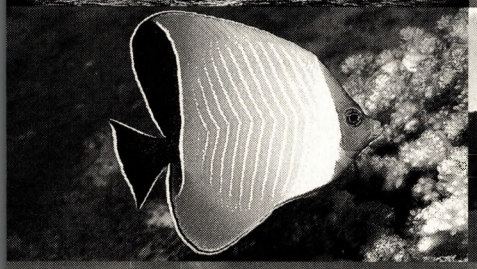
Dazzling living corals and a never ending parade of marine life have made the Florida Keys a diving tradition for many visitors. But if you want to keep your own visit unique and individualized, Silent World offers you just the kind of service you need. Dive packages include accommodations, your own personalized dive schedule, with tanks and weights provided on board the boat and the gracious, friendly attention of Silent World's professional staff. Just call (800) 966-DIVE or (305) 451-3252 for more information or write to P.O. Box 2363, Key Largo, FL 33037.

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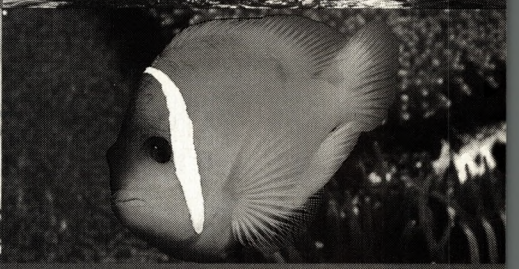














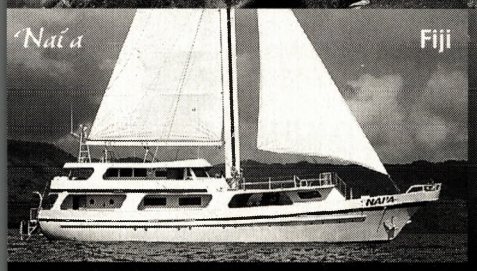


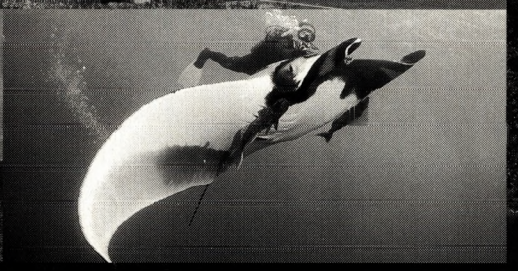














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TECHNIFACTS

(Continued from Page 27)

and began to rig Murray Black for a dive to complete the job.

Murray Black wore a pneumofathometer (a very accurate depth indicator) that showed his true depth on a surface gauge. When Black was on the bottom the depth recorder indicated 321 feet. However, the open end of the pneumo was not at the diver's feet but somewhere near his waist or even higher. True depth at the site was therefore greater. In this case, perhaps as deep as 327 feet. The contractor superintendent determined the depth—for Black's pay purpose—to be 312 feet. That may have been the top of the pipe. Later, Torrance Parker, another reputable veteran California commercial diver, worked on the pipe and he also determined the depth of water to be 321 feet.

Is there a well documented record of any helmet dive using compressed air in more than 321 feet of water? Technifacts would be interested in learning of such a record. Also, what is the current depth record by divers using compressed air?

NEXT MONTH

Next month, Technifacts will describe the saga of two wrecks with the same name. One is a myth; is one a true treasure ship?

If you would like to know how the divers determined the pressure and volume of air required for both helmet and the scuba divers at that depth, send a stamped, self addressed envelope to E. R. Cross, c/o Technifacts, SKIN DIVER Magazine, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048-2966.

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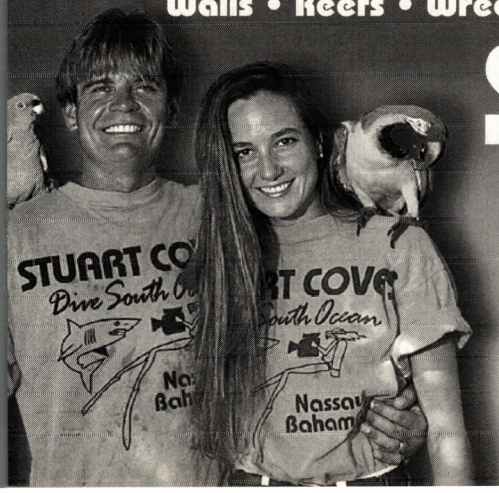


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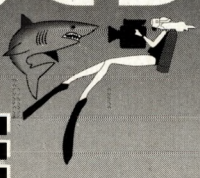
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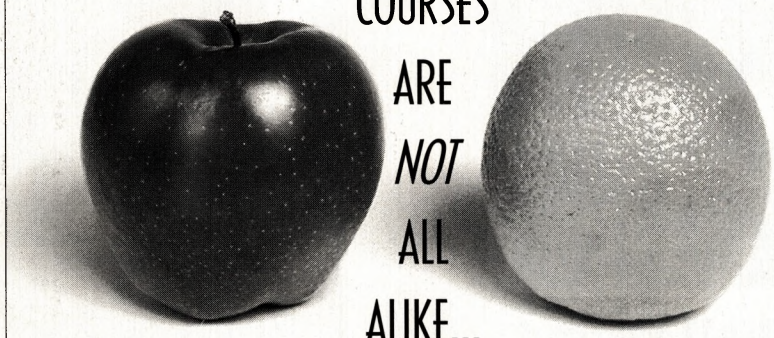
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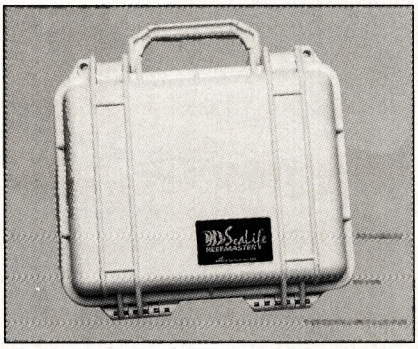
PIONEER'S SEALIFE REEFMASTER

(Continued from Page 34)

era's viewfinder. You turn the camera on before putting it in the housing, when you look through the viewfinder and lightly press the shutter release, a red light will glow, showing the power is on. If it isn't used within two minutes the camera shuts itself off, thus saving battery power. It will turn on again as soon as the shutter release is pressed.

After turning the camera on, slip it into the housing and insert the packet of Moisture Muncher (it's silica gel, a drying agent, and absorbs excess humidity). Then clean and grease the O-ring and replace it (the booklet shows you how—it's quick and easy), put the housing parts together and carefully close the latches—you're ready to shoot. Everything you need—cleaning cloth, cotton swabs, O-ring grease and Moisture Muncher—comes with the camera system, there's even a spare O-ring and two spare Moisture Muncher packets.

U/W shooting is a snap. Just unlock the shutter lock, make sure the strobe



The SeaLife Reefmaster comes in a sturdy, foam lined, watertight resin case.

ready light glows green and press the shutter release. First, however, read the section in the booklet entitled Tips for Great Pictures. If you do, your success rate will be much higher, right away.

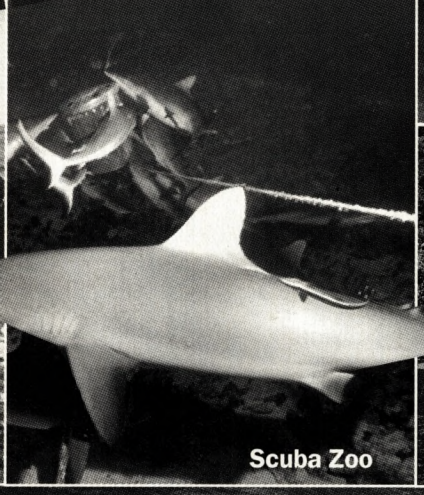
Positively buoyant underwater, the Reefmaster housing is pressure resistant to 164 feet (50 meters). The SeaLife Reefmaster is also great for taking pictures topside in rain, snow and other challenging conditions.

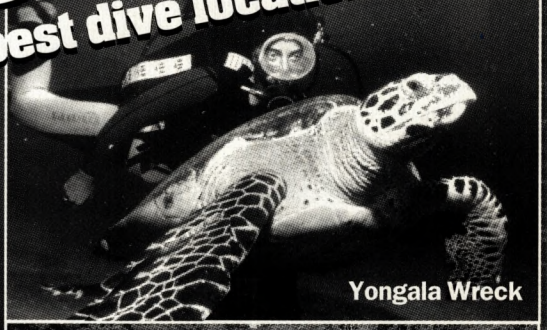
Pioneer, the 20 year old company that makes the SeaLife Reefmaster, also makes the SeaLife Sport Diver, an automatic 35mm camera with its own flexible housing that's intended for use down to 45 feet (although it's pressure resistant to 100). The Sport Diver sells for $99. For more information on SeaLife products or the name of a dealer near you, contact the company at 216 Haddon Avenue, Westmont, New Jersey 08108; (800) 257-7742, (609) 854-2424; fax (609) 858-8695.

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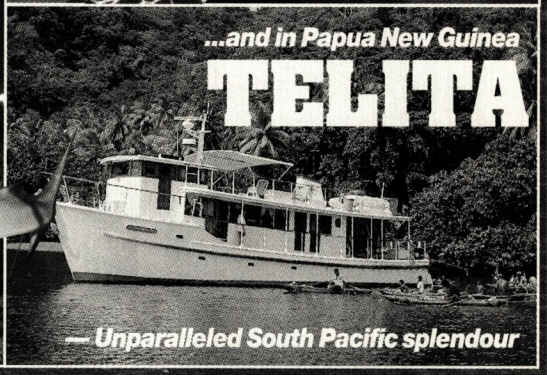

Mike Ball


Scuba Zoo

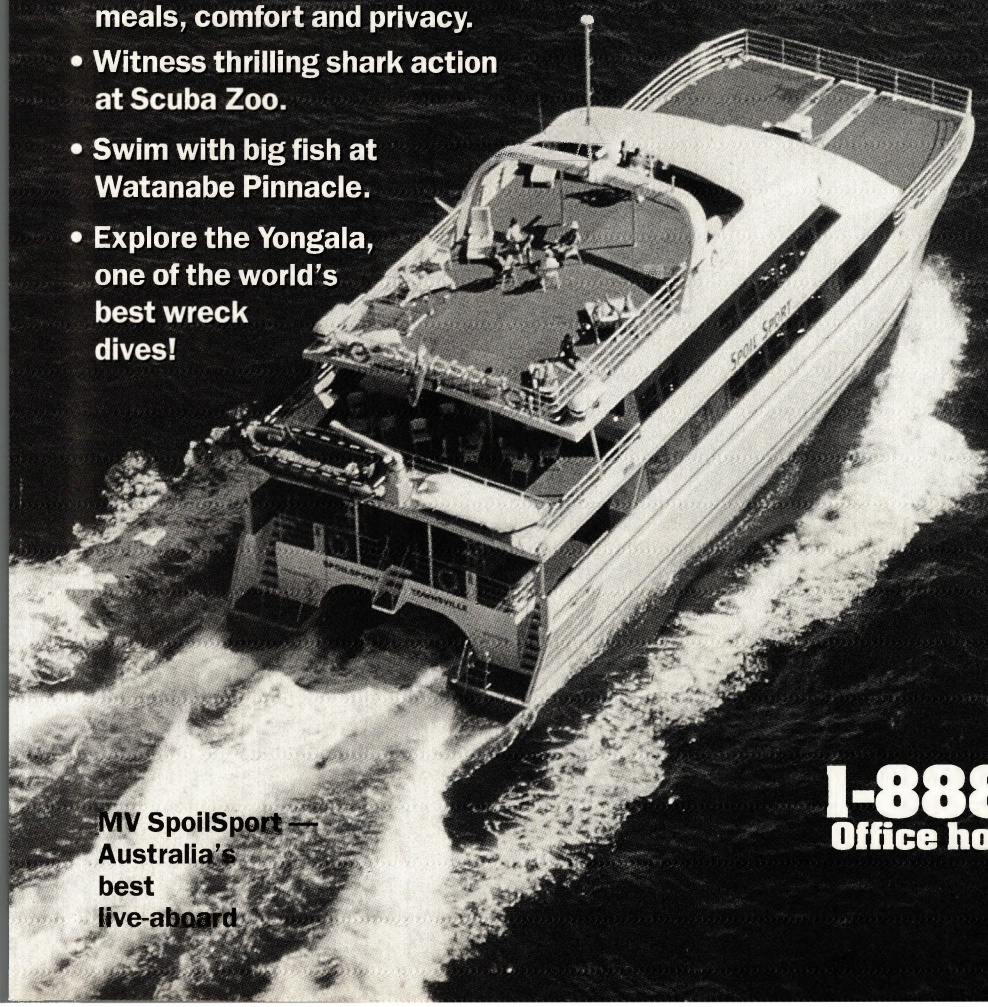

Yongala Wreck

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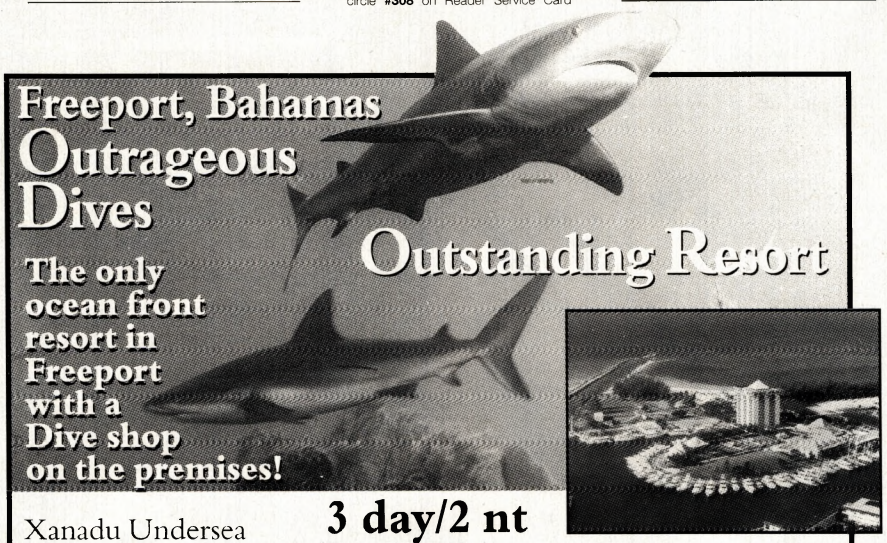


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PROVO TURTLE DIVERS

(Continued from Page 24)

and mini-walls. Night dives are scheduled once every week, however, one can be added anytime a group is interested. The nightlife on these reefs is terrific, with everything from Orange Ball Corallimorphs to Sharptail Eels.

Traveling to Providenciales is as easy as getting to any tropical island can be. The trip is less than an hour from Miami by jet. All you need to enter the Turks and Caicos is a passport or a certified birth certificate. There is no need to stop for money exchange because U.S. dollars are the official currency. Electrical adapters are not required because the electricity is 110 volts. Dress is island casual, which means shorts, shirt and sandals should be fine almost anywhere. The water temperature averages about 80°F, with lows around 77°F and highs about 84°F. Most divers find a shorty or 3mm wetsuit comfortable in the winter, while a Lycra skin or bathing suit will do in the summer.

For more information, contact Provo Turtle Divers in the U.S. at (800) 833-1341. From other locations, call (954) 467-3460 or fax your request to (954) 467-7544. To call the shop direct in the Turks and Caicos, dial (809) 946-4232. You can also write to Provo Turtle Divers at P.O. Box 350154, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33335 or e-mail proturtl@caribsurf.com.

Dive Notes

NIKON'S NEW PRONEA 6i: The Pronea 6i, Nikon's first Advanced Photo System single lens reflex (SLR) camera, combines Nikon's renowned quality and innovation with the advantages of the Advanced Photo System. It features a comprehensive selection of Nikon SLR technological advances, such as 3-D Matrix Metering, Focus Tracking with Lock On and built-in wide-angle coverage Speedlight with automatic balanced fill flash control.

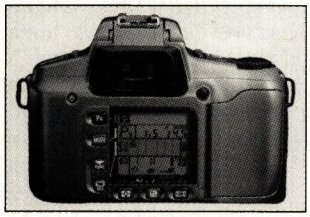
"Customers appreciate the simple operation that is associated with Advanced Photo System cameras such as Nuvis by Nikon...drop-in film loading, all auto operation, print aspect ratio (PAR) and picture quality improvement (PQI) have quickly become popular features," said Richard LoPinto, Nikon's vice president, photo marketing division.

The name Pronea was chosen to indicate the beginning of a newly advanced system. "Pro" for forward, advanced thinking and "nea" for the beginning of a

new opportunity for photographers. Pronea will symbolize Nikon's Advanced Photo System SLR development.

A key component for Nikon designers was to ensure the new Pronea 6i would appeal to owners of AF Nikkor optics. To





accomplish this, the advanced Nikon F lens mount was employed; the same lens mount used for Nikon's advanced 35mm SLR cameras. This means photographers can use all AF Nikkor lenses, including AF Nikkor optics together with a selection of Nikon's 35mm SLRs and the new Pronea 6i. In addition to the expansive AF Nikkor lens system, Nikon will also introduce a selection of three new IX-Nikkor lenses, designed exclusively for the Pronea 6i.

For more information, please contact Nikon Inc., 1300 Walt Whitman Road, Melville, NY 11747; phone (800) NIKON-US or access the Nikon Inc. Web Site at http://www.nikonusa.com.

THE REMODELED *MANTHIRI*: The Maldives' finest live-aboard dive vessel recently underwent a major refit. The *Manthiri*'s spacious main deck level sundeck has been relocated to the upper deck. In its place is a huge 500 square foot main salon featuring an extremely spacious dining area, plus an area for relaxing, featuring six sofas and a complete audio/visual center.



The *Manthiri* is fully air-conditioned and offers six twin/double cabins, each with private bath. Meals are outstanding and the personalized service is among the world's best—one crew member per guest.

Trips vary from 9 to 14 nights. For complete details and booking information, contact Tropical Adventures Travel, 111 Second North, Seattle, WA 98109 or phone (800) 247-3483, fax (206) 441-5431.

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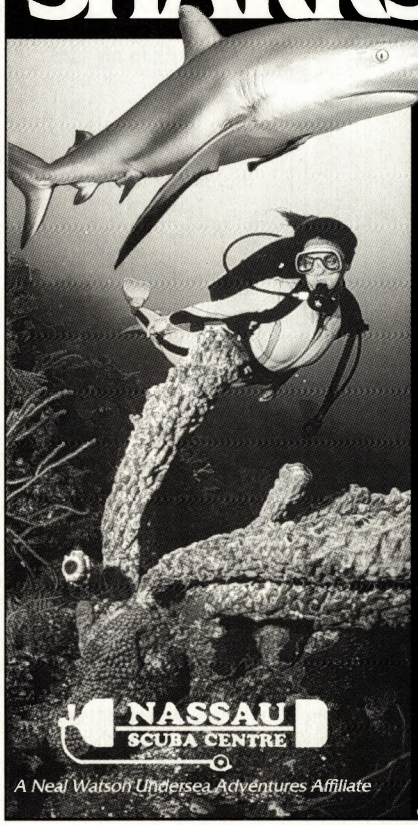
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Dive Notes

MIDWAY ATOLL OPEN TO DIVERS: Midway Atoll, some 1,300 miles north of the Hawaiian Islands, is perhaps the most remote island on earth. After being closed to the public for more than 100 years, divers now have the rare opportunity to explore and discover its many treasures.

Because of Midway's geographic location, the marine life differs significantly from anywhere else in the world! The combination of changing temperatures, a persistent high atmospheric pressure system and deep oceanic currents results in clear, nutrient rich waters. The marine life is generally much larger, more abundant and less fearful than that found in Hawaiian waters.

Midway Atoll consists of three islands that are virtually encompassed by a reef that rises above the surface and shelters the lagoon. Inside the reef, calm waters reach 40 feet in depth. Among the many coral heads there are numerous species of exotic reef fish, some of which are endemic. A pod of 200 Spinner Dolphins frequently uses the lagoon for leisure activities. Green Sea Turtles, Jurassic Park Spiny Lobster, Spotted Eagle Rays and rare Hawaiian Monk Seals are also found here.

Outside the reef, diving depths average 60 feet. Expect to see a conglomeration of lava tubes, archways, ledges and overhangs. This is where large pelagics are encountered: Manta Rays, jacks, groupers, snappers and reef sharks.

Shipwrecks on the reefs date back to the 1800s and aircraft lost in these waters during WW II await discovery.

Midway Atoll is east of the International Dateline. For more information, contact Midway Dive-n-Snorkel Corporation, c/o Lihue Airport Operations, 3901 Mokulele Loop, #29, Lihue, Hawaii 96766-9797; (808) 421-1500, fax (808) 421-0444.

SELISKY TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF INSTITUTE OF DIVING: Lee Selisky, president of Sea Pearls and DEMA, was recently elected to the board of directors of the Institute of Diving in Panama City Beach, Florida. An avid diver since 1969, Selisky has a strong interest in the history of diving and is an avid collector of diving memorabilia.



The Institute of Diving is a nonprofit educational organization formed in 1977, under the leadership of the late Dr. George Bond, known as the Father of Saturation Diving. The institute operates the Museum of Man in the Sea and offers exhibits of actual diving gear including sport, military and commercial diving equipment, as well as shipwreck artifacts from the Florida Keys. Among the interesting items in the museum's collection is an extensive display of oxygen and mixed gas rebreathers.

The museum also includes a library with numerous books on diving and related ocean topics. It is the only museum in the United States dedicated solely to diving.

Membership in the Institute of Diving is open to anyone interested in the history of diving and Man in the Sea. For more information, contact the Museum of Man in the Sea at (904) 235-4101.

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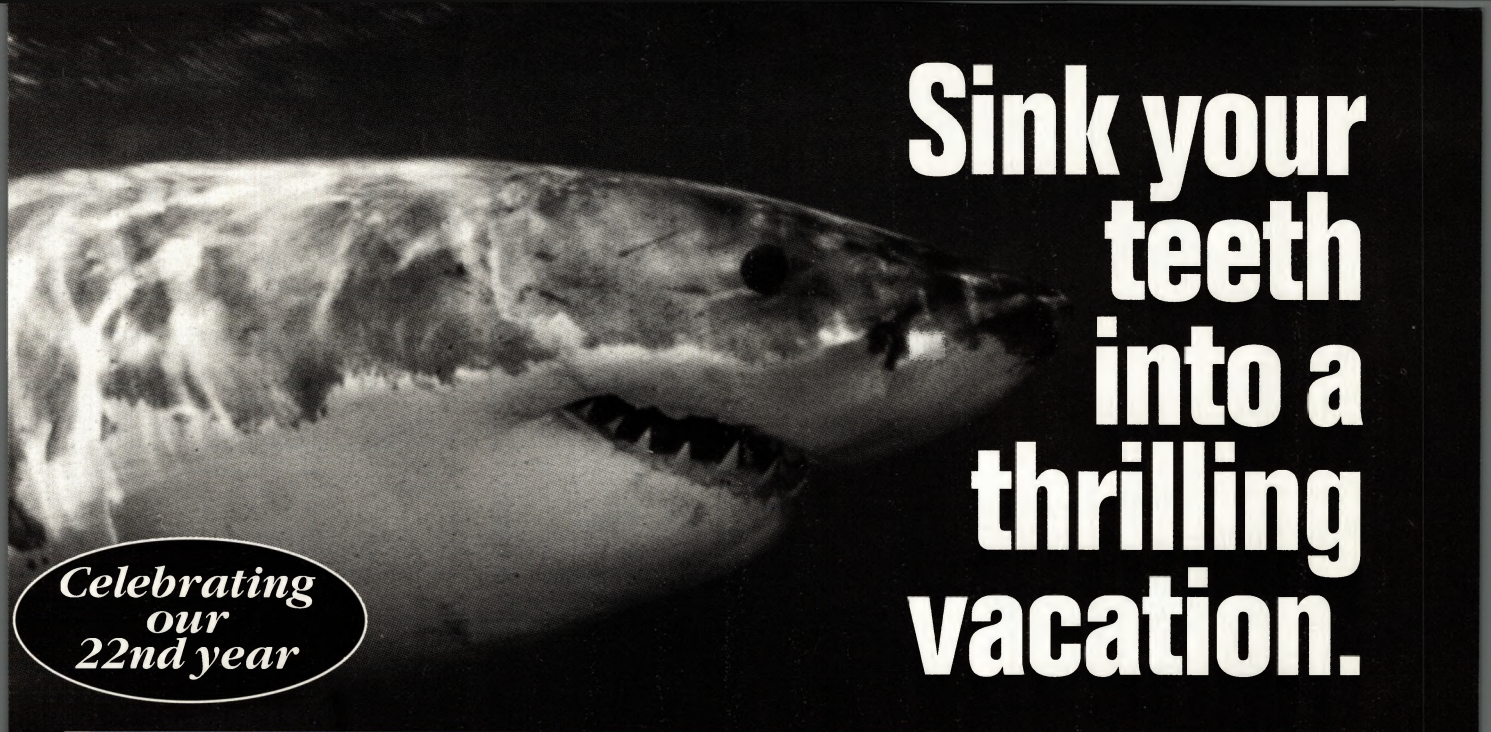
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Mike Ball's impressive live-aboard fleet explores the best of Australia and Papua New Guinea. Clockwise from below: The 100 foot *Spoilsport*, 70 foot *Watersport*, 90 foot *Supersport* and 60 foot *Telita*.





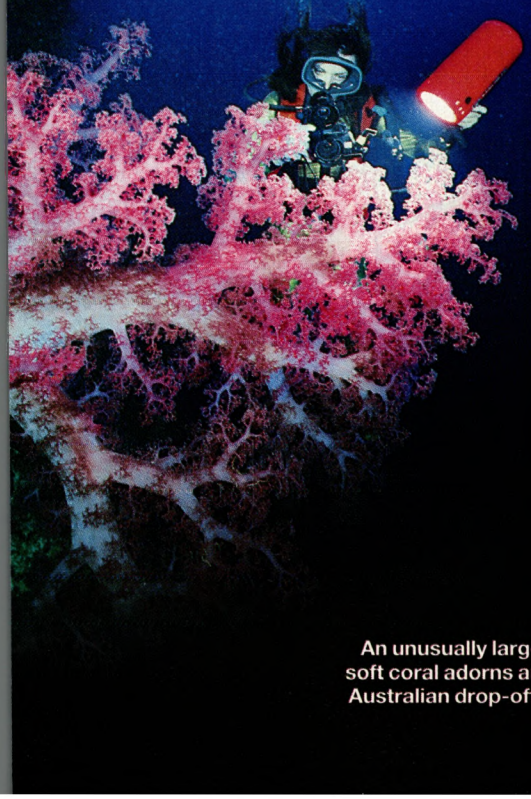
photo/Al Hornsby

Expanding for New Adventures

Mike Ball Dive Fleet



photo/courtesy Mike Ball



An unusually large soft coral adorns an Australian drop-off.

BY AL HORNSBY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GERI MURPHY

The Mike Ball fleet, long regarded as Australia's most popular live-aboards, is completing a flurry of projects to expand its dive operations. This means opportunities for dive adventures never before offered.

Beyond the normal Great Barrier Reef (GBR) routes, Mike has added exploratory trips (for 1998) north out of Lizard Island—well beyond the range of any existing live-aboards. Additionally, the Minke Whale expeditions, begun this past year, provide divers with the rare chance to encounter these majestic whales up close and eye to eye. With the addition of the popular live-aboard *Telita*, in Papua New Guinea, an entire new area of diving is available to Mike's customers. With the christening of the new *Paradise Sport* sometime next year, the most remote, uncharted reefs of Papua New Guinea will become available to divers everywhere for the first time.

The Mike Ball fleet has earned a reputation for innovation with the first live-aboard in Australia to provide E-6 processing; the first to use catamarans for a high level of comfort; the first to use a spotter plane to locate large marine life; and as the originator of the Peace on the Reef environmental awareness program. All of these are the result of a tireless drive to create and improve by Mike and his staff. And now, that same sense of innovation and energy has been renewed and will be aimed at creating new adventures.

According to Mike, "I was kept out of the water by a medical concern for the last few years but finally I'm back....Now, it's like starting all over again. We're out discovering new dives, thinking of new, exciting things to do and see—and our customers are going to get to share every bit of it!"

The fleet has much to offer and, for the diver considering Australia or Papua New Guinea, the many different options should not be missed.

WATERSPORT

The *Watersport*, Mike's original boat, operates out of Townsville. Seventy feet long, with a 30 foot beam, it cruises at eight knots and can comfortably carry 26 passengers, served by eight experienced staff members. Like all Mike Ball boats, it has a full range of rental equipment, support inflatables and a variety of entertainment options. *Watersport* specializes in three day trips to some of the GBR's most popular sites, such as **Wheeler Reef**, **Keeper Reef** and the wreck of the ***Yongala***.

The *Yongala* is regarded as one of Australia's most exciting dives. In 90 feet of water off the coast of Cape Bowling Green, the wreck is crowded with schooling fish and large marine animals. Giant Queensland Groupers, Bull



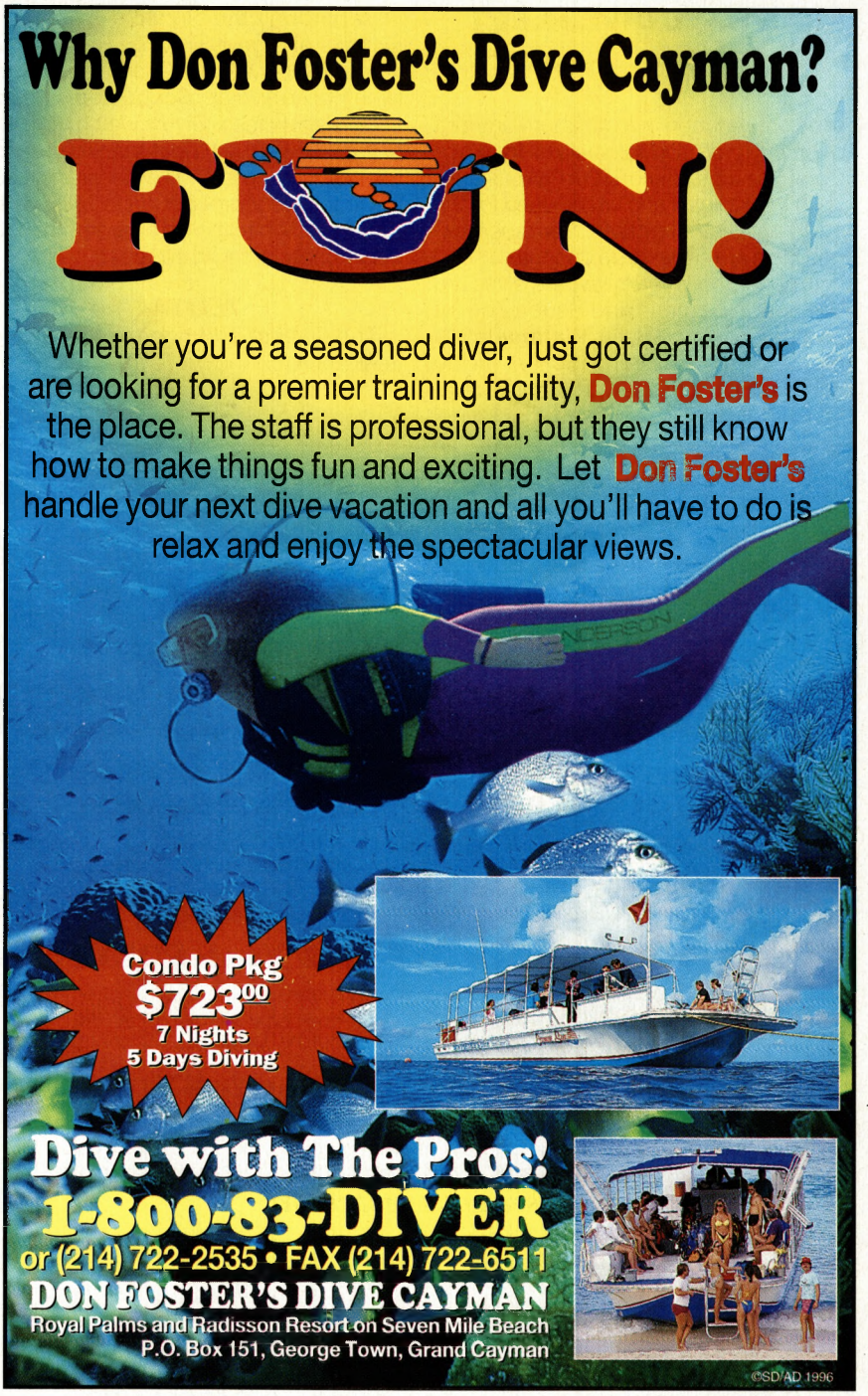
Sharks, Eagle Rays, huge Bull Rays, Leopard Sharks, Napoleon Wrasse and many others congregate, providing incredible photographic opportunities.

SUPERSPORT

Ninety feet long with a 34 foot beam, *Supersport* is fast, quiet and smooth. Complete with all Mike Ball amenities, 26 passengers are served by a crew of 10, with a range of accommodation choices. *Supersport* specializes in four day trips to **Cod Hole**, providing the rare opportunity to dive with huge Potato Cod and Napoleon Wrasse. After being fed for many years, the large fish are unafraid of divers and will eagerly approach close enough to touch. The surrounding reef is exciting as well, with numerous Whitetip Reef Sharks in residence.

SPOILSPORT

Regarded as Australia's most luxurious live-aboard, *Spoilsport* is the crown jewel of the Mike Ball fleet. At 100 feet and with a 36 foot beam, its crew of 10 provides a pampered experience for up to 29 guests in twin or double accommodations. All fleet amenities, of course, are available and *Spoilsport*'s 16 knot cruising speed means even remote dive



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MIKE BALL DIVE FLEET

sites are reached in a minimum amount of time. *Spoilsport* specializes in exotic Coral Sea trips, some 150 miles offshore, visits the *Yongala* and will be used for the 1998 exploratory cruises. *Spoilsport* expeditions are seven days in length.

Among *Spoilsport*'s favorite dives are Watanabe Bommie and Scuba Zoo (at South Boomerang Reef). **Watanabe** is a pinnacle that rises from 150 feet on the outside of Flinder's Reef. The crystal clear water around the pinnacle is home to schools of Bigeye Trevally, Barracuda, mantas, Gray Whaler Sharks and other large marine animals. **Scuba Zoo** is *Spoilsport*'s shark feed. Divers watch from inside a 70 by 10 by 10 foot safety cage and fish are dropped into the water as the feed begins. The shark action is wild, with Blacktips, Whitetips and Hammerheads occasionally joining in the melee.

TELITA

The newest addition to Mike Ball's fleet, the well known *Telita* operates in Papua New Guinea's finest dive areas. Bob Halstead, the original owner of *Telita*, remains a part of the operation, thus his knowledge of the best diving will not be lost. *Telita* is 60 feet long with an 18 foot beam and a crew of five supporting ten guests.

Telita's favorite dive sites include Dinah's Beach and Banana Bommie. **Dinah's Beach** is a shallow (30 feet and less) dive in a quiet bay. For photographers it is heaven; there are five species of lionfish, six different anemonefish, Blue Ribbon Eels, Cuttlefish, Ghost Pipefish, Mantis Shrimp and the list goes on and on. There are big fish as well—a Marlin has been known to occasionally cruise in to eye divers.

Banana Bommie is off East Cape and features spectacular marine life. Huge schools of baitfish hover over the reef in April and May and pelagics such as Mackerel and tuna move in. Soft corals, huge fans and seawhips add color, while thousands of reef tropicals move about the reef in a dazzling array of nature's bounty.

PARADISE SPORT

When *Paradise Sport* comes on the scene next year, it promises to be the best Mike Ball offering yet. In Mike's words, "It will have every successful feature and amenity known to the live-aboard trade....Then, it will introduce some new concepts no dive boat we know of has ever provided. These are so secret—you'll just have to wait until *Paradise Sport* is completed to see!"

The Mike Ball fleet welcomes divers to experience the best of Australia and Papua New Guinea. For complete information, contact Carol Evans at Mike Ball Dive Expeditions' U.S. office at (888) MIKE BALL (645-3225) or fax (520) 556-9598.

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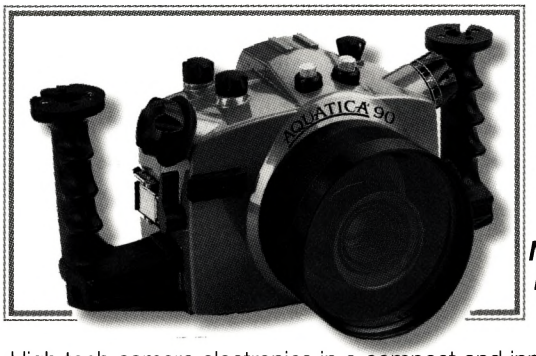
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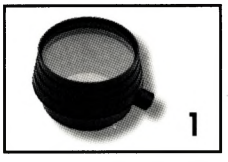
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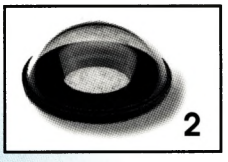
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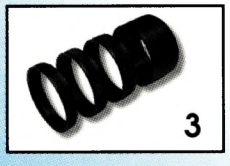
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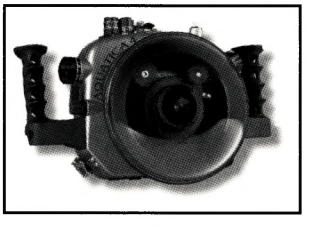
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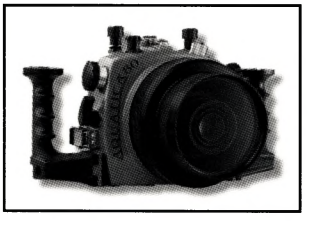
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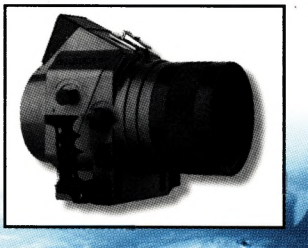
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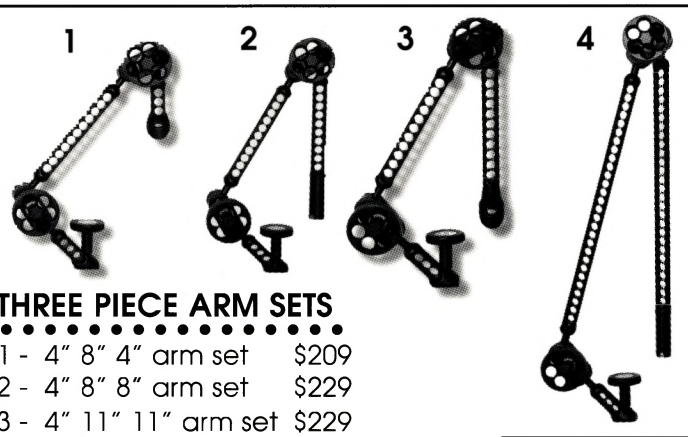
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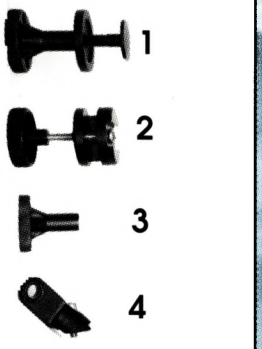
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SDM Editors' Christmas Ideas for Divers of All Ages!

BY TY SAWYER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

EDITORS' PICK OF THE MONTH



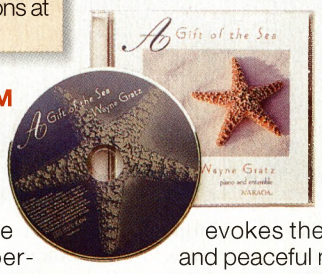
PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS' FISH PUZZLE: This clever jigsaw puzzle is unlike any you've seen before. Each piece is in the shape of a marine animal and illustrated with original watercolor artwork. On the reverse side of each piece is its common name, habitat and behavioral information. Put all the pieces together and you have one big fish. This factually interesting and beautiful puzzle is made of laminated Baltic birch, comes in a durable steel can and sells for $65. For a gift that is both a meaningful learning tool and fun to put together, call Peaceful Solutions at (610) 640-9913.



MATTEL'S STREET SHARK: Meet Blades, a Tiger Shark hand puppet with a bad attitude. Let him out of the box if you dare. Tell G.I. Joe, T-Rex and the guppies in your aquarium to beware! His slashing jaws and menacing fists will gnaw and pummel anything in a frenzy of ferocious fun. And, if you think Blades is tough, wait until you meet his friends (not shown), JAB, the hard-nosed Hammerhead and Big Slammu, the Killer Whale, whose teeth and scowl say, "This ain't Sea World, boy!" Blades and his buddies are available for around $21. For information on your nearest retailer, call (800) 524-TOYS.



CITIZEN TITANIUM 200M WATCH: With an injection molded titanium case and bracelet, this watch is made to endure extreme use. It is also 30 percent lighter than stainless steel, won't scratch and keeps ticking to more than 600 feet. A simple white face clearly displays the time, day and date without distracting and unnecessary bells and whistles. There are luminescent hands and hour markings for night use and a one way rotating bezel to keep track of elapsed time. The safety clasp extends for use with a wetsuit. The Titanium 200M retails for $495 and fits neatly in a Christmas stocking. For information on a dealer near you, call (800) 321-3173.



NARADA'S A GIFT FROM THE SEA: Wayne Gratz' latest CD, *A Gift From the Sea*, evokes the quiet eloquence and peaceful motions of the sea with such easy, elegant melodies and piano impressions that we quickly become a part of his heart-felt reverie. Narada has long been associated with critically acclaimed, nature themed recordings and this 20 bit mastered CD continues and magnifies its tradition of musical excellence and environmental awareness. *A Gift From the Sea*, at $13.98 and available at your local music retailer, is for everyone who is inspired by the sea and its ancient, timeless rhythms.

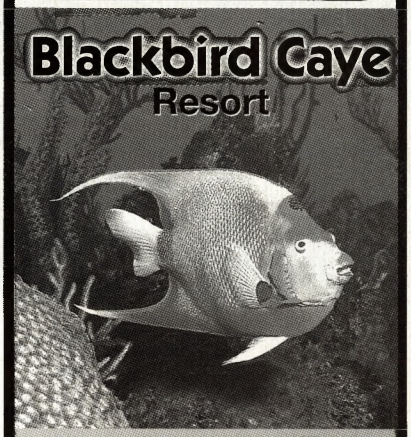


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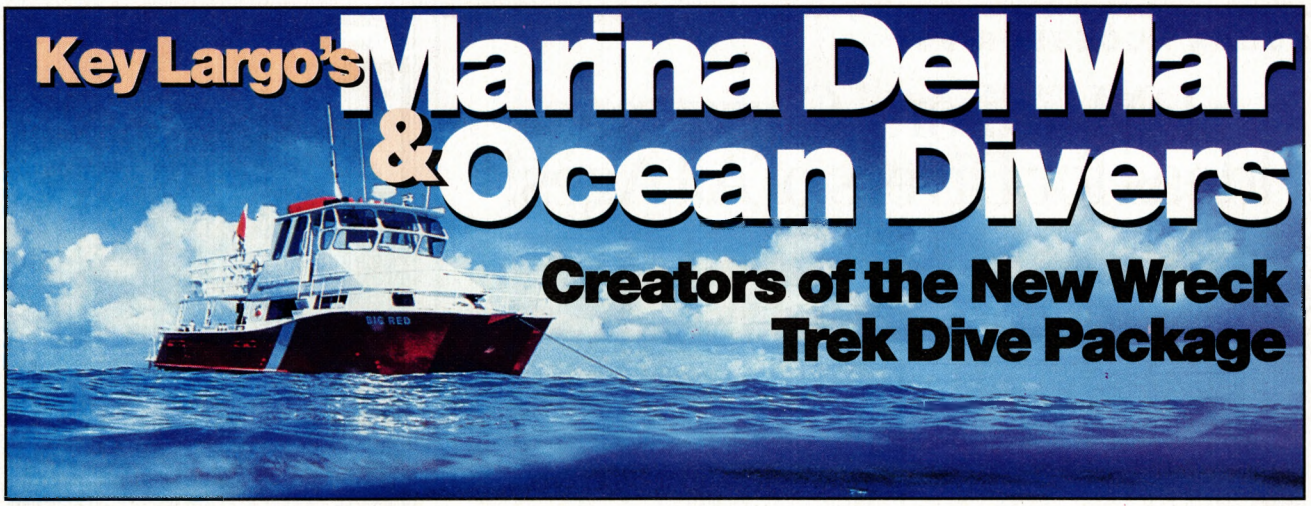


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Key Largo's Marina Del Mar & Ocean Divers

Creators of the New Wreck Trek Dive Package



TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK

Key Largo, Florida, is fast becoming known as the best wreck dive destination this side of Truk Lagoon. Anticipating the addition of the massive 510 foot *Spiegel Grove* to the Key Largo artificial reef portfolio, wreck divers from all over the world are planning trips to sample the modern and historical shipwrecks easily accessible just offshore. To facilitate this flood of visitors, one of Key Largo's most innovative dive operators, Ocean Divers, has created the Wreck Trek package. It features four days of diving Key Largo's best shipwrecks, along with a sampling of the reefs for which this destination is justifiably famous. In addition to diving the wrecks with an experienced and well established operation, Ocean Divers, there are great custom boats (the 50 foot *Ocean Diver* and the 50 foot catamaran *Big Red*) and special services such as wreck dive specialties and enriched air (nitrox).

WRECK TREK ITINERARY—DAY #1: The Wreck Trek program is intended as a sampler of Key Largo's premier shipwrecks. As such, it makes sense to begin with Key Largo's biggest and newest shipwreck, the ***Spiegel Grove***. It is scheduled to be sunk in early this month at a designated artificial reef site south of **The Elbow**. It will rest in about 115 feet of water. The wreck's colossal size, 510 feet long by 84 feet wide, will make it attractive for divers of all experience levels and even snorkelers! The plan is to use controlled cutting explosives along the hull to sink the vessel in an upright position. If it settles on the bottom as planned, much of the wreck will be accessible in 30 to 60 feet of water. But, if she lands on her side, the uppermost portion of the boat will lie in just 30 feet of water. Because most of the best diving is five to six miles offshore, two tank expeditions are most practical. After the *Grove*, a terrific second







Top: *Big Red*, Ocean Divers' 50 foot catamaran. Above: Divers at the rail of the *Duane*, an ex-U.S. Coast Guard cutter sunk in 1987. Below left: The Christ of the Abyss statue, one of the Keys' well known dive sites. Below right: The wreckage of the *Benwood*.

dive is the nearby wreck of the *Benwood*.

Because of the danger of German U-boats stalking the shipping lanes off Florida, the 360 foot ***Benwood*** was running blacked out on the evening of April 9, 1942, when she collided with another freighter. Her bow was crushed and the *Benwood* mortally wounded. Her captain turned the stricken ship toward shore, hoping to beach her and avoid sinking. The damage was too great, however, and the ship was abandoned to her fate, ultimately sinking in 35 to 45 feet of water about a mile northeast of **French Reef**. To minimize the hazard to navigation, the *Benwood* was blown apart but her scattered wreckage is now a magnet for marine life. Huge schools of Porkfish, goatfish and grunts surround the mostly intact bow section; Copper Sweepers and moray eels hide along the convoluted recesses within the stern.

Day #2: Key Largo reefs have claimed dozens of significant shipwrecks through the years, the result of careless mariners who strayed too close to the extensive shallow spur and groove coral formations that fringe the island. Yet in 1987, the local dive community decided to enhance the wreck dive portfolio with two spectacular 327 foot ships, the U.S. Coast Guard cutters *Bibb* and ***Duane***. The *Duane* landed upright in 120 feet of water, while the *Bibb* settled on her starboard side in 130 feet. Both are just outside the southern boundary of the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary, about seven miles offshore.

Ocean Divers has long made diving these wrecks a specialty. The *Duane* is dived most often because her upright orientation allows a shallower profile. In the nine years these wrecks have been down both have acquired a colorful cloak of encrusting sponges, gorgonians and even hard corals. The *Duane* is rich with marine life, especially the huge school of Barracuda along the crow's nest. The wheelhouse is now clogged with grunts. This is one of the best wide angle photo ops in the entire Florida Keys.

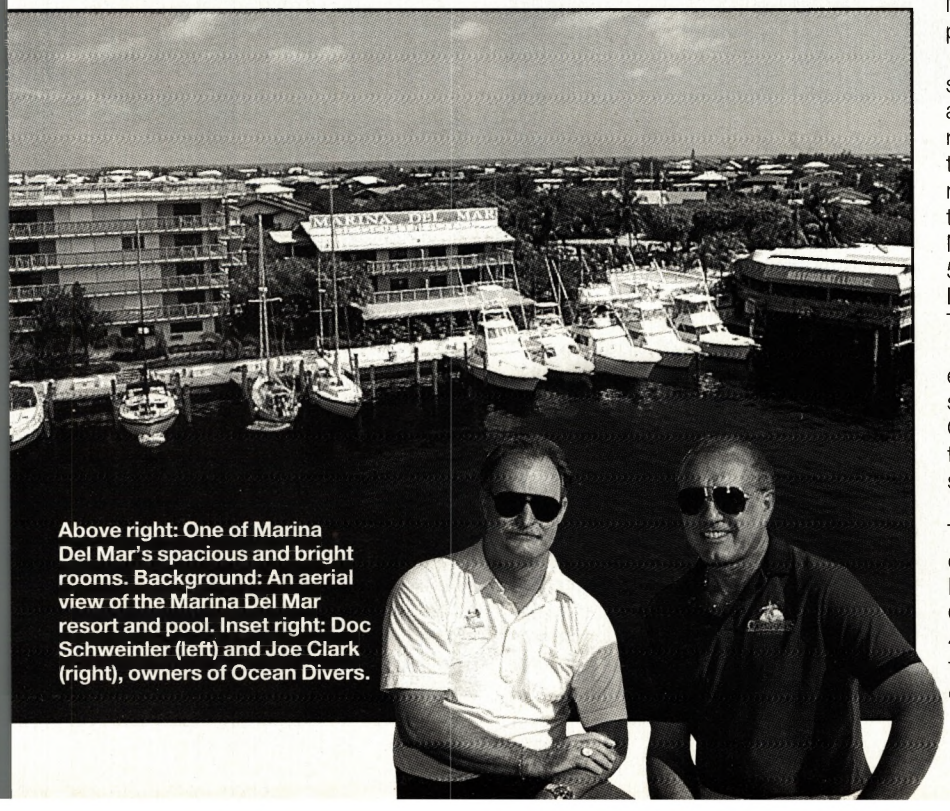
The second dive of this day will target one of the shallow coral reefs off Key Largo, probably **Molasses Reef**. It offers some of the most abundant and diverse species of reef tropicals found anywhere in this hemisphere, as confirmed by a recent fish count by Reef Environmental Education Foundation. The combination of the exceptional visibility typical of Molasses (owing to the proximity of the Gulf Stream), high profile coral heads and awesome marine life makes this a perfect complement to the *Duane* dive.

Day #3: The ***Bibb*** is rarely dived by other dive operators but Ocean Divers makes a point to include it in the Wreck Trek because it is so colorful and fascinating. The crow's nest and propellers are rich with brilliant crimson gorgonians and fields of colonial hydroids, sponges and corals have transformed the rails and companionways into a unique deepwater ecosystem. The port rail is encountered at 90 feet and most dives are planned to a depth of about 110. A shallow dive on **Pickles Reef** is a perfect opportunity to offgas following the *Bibb* adventure.

Day #4: On this final day of the Wreck Trek package, most divers will want to revisit the *Spiegel Grove*. Since it's 510 feet long, there is no way it can be seen adequately in a single dive and a second expedition is included. The second dive is often by the collective choice of the package guests and might include any of the many Key Largo favorites such as the **Christ of the Abyss** statue, the wreck of the ***City of Washington*** or **North North Dry Rocks**.







Above right: One of Marina Del Mar's spacious and bright rooms. Background: An aerial view of the Marina Del Mar resort and pool. Inset right: Doc Schweinler (left) and Joe Clark (right), owners of Ocean Divers.

MARINA DEL MAR

The lodging part of the Wreck Trek package is with Key Largo's most popular dive resort, Marina Del Mar, conveniently adjacent to Ocean Divers on a deep water canal. This allows divers to simply stroll from their rooms to the dive boat dock. If guests choose to utilize Ocean Diver's guest gear storage room, the combination of staying at Marina Del Mar and diving with Ocean Divers is especially effortless.

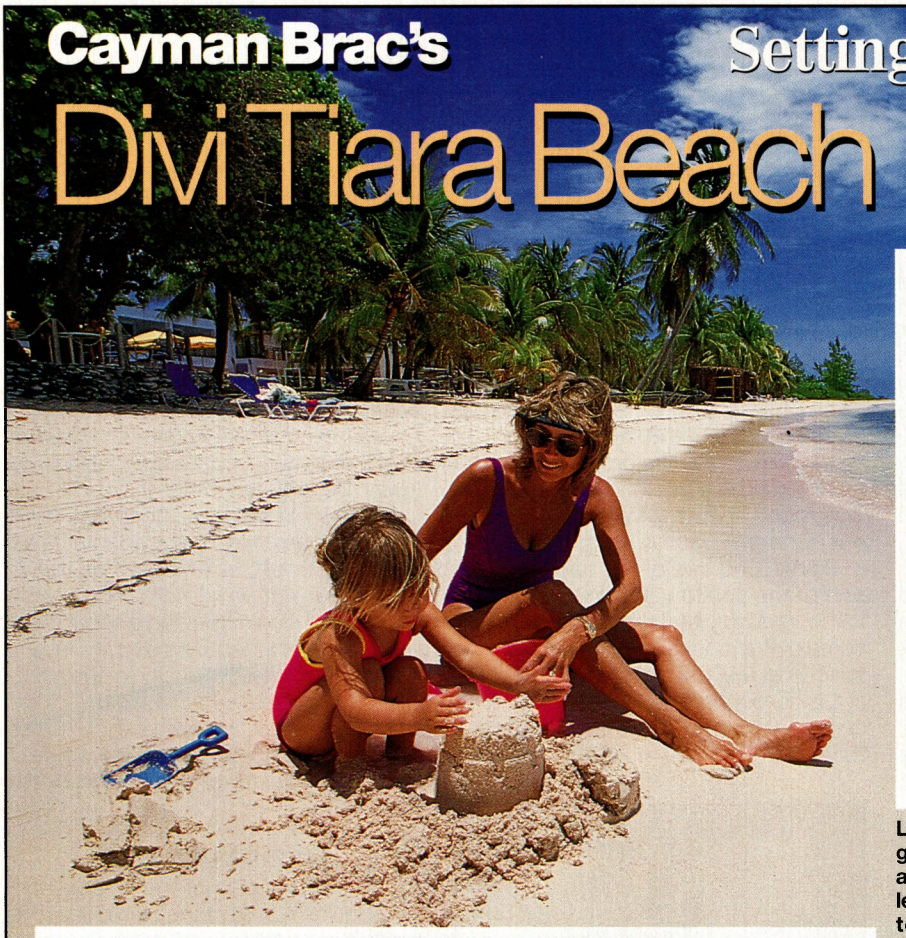
Marina Del Mar offers 76 rooms and suites, as well as a 42 slip marina. Other amenities include a large waterfront restaurant and lounge, conference facilities, lighted tennis courts, a Nautilus fitness room and a huge heated freshwater swimming pool. A sister property, Marina Del Mar Bayside, is nearby with 54 double rooms and two villas. Marina Del Mar Bayside also features Wreck Trek packages.

It is especially appropriate that divers enjoy the hospitality of Marina Del Mar resorts. The Marr family, Stuart, Scott and Chester, have been generous and influential in making the *Spiegel Grove* and other shipwrecks available for sport divers.

For more information about the Wreck Trek packages or any of the dive/lodging opportunities available through Ocean Divers and Marina Del Mar, please call Ocean Divers at (800) 451-1113 or (305) 451-1113. The fax is (305) 451-5765 and the e-mail address is oceandivrs@aol.com.

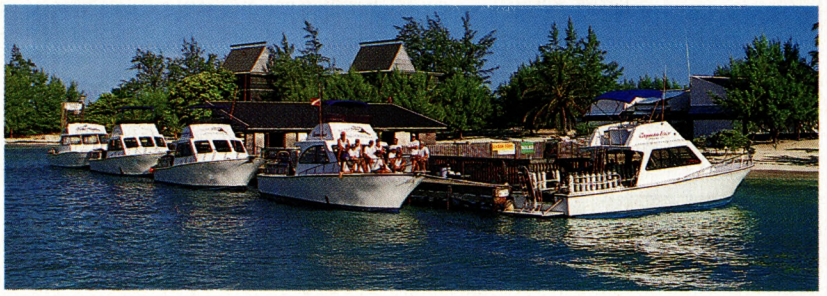
Cayman Brac's Divi Tiara Beach

Setting the Standard for Dedicated Dive Resorts

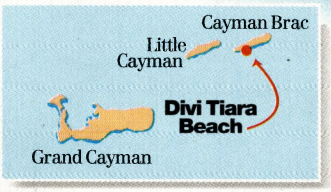




Left: Divi Tiara's beach is an ideal playground. Above: Photo opportunities abound on Cayman Brac's reefs. Below left: The dive/photo complex is at the water's edge, where the fleet is docked.







TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK

Every July I visit one of my favorite Caribbean dive resorts, the Divi Tiara Beach on Cayman Brac. The reason for the visit is that Divi Tiara hosts a Nikonos Shootout and I'm part of the administrative staff. However, I enjoy these visits so much that I bring my family. My daughter plays on the sandy beach and swims in the pool; my wife and I enjoy some exceptional diving along Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. The resort is safe, friendly, wonderfully suited to families and one of the most perfectly designed dedicated dive resorts anywhere.

In the 1980s, the Divi Tiara Beach created a new standard for dedicated dive resorts. Under the direction of dive operations guru Peter Hughes, Divi Resorts built a terrific dive/photo complex right at the water's edge. This allowed the rental gear, tanks and guest gear storage to be just a few steps away from the boat dock. Of course, there is a sign-up board so divers can choose from a menu of daily dive destinations and, as is standard with any Peter Hughes dive operation, the boats are state of the art V-hulled diesel vessels.

Photographers are targeted as prime clients for this operation and the new photo wing is both spacious and ergonomic. There is a massive E-6 darkroom with a sink-line that can accommodate 30 rolls of film in a single run; an extensive inventory of rental Nikonos cameras and videos; film and accessories for sale; and a large classroom ideal for editing slides and hosting seminars.

The hotel was also designed for diver convenience. The dining is buffetstyle, which I like at a dive resort because it allows for a leisurely meal without wasting time waiting for food. Meal service is often too slow at island resorts and I much prefer leaving more time for the important things—such as diving. Amenities such as a freshwater swimming pool, conference center and lighted tennis court all enhance the convenience, comfort and, ultimately, the dive experience of the guests.

Yet, the reality of being in the tropical resort business is that constant renovation and upgrades are necessary. Just because a resort was state of the art in 1986 doesn't necessarily mean it will be





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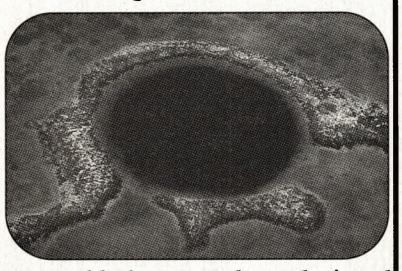
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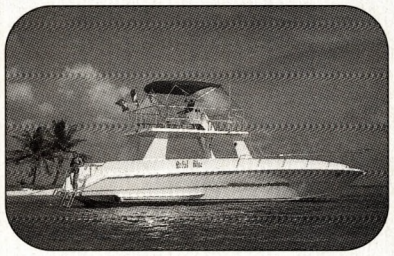
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DIVI TIARA BEACH

so a decade later. After visiting Tiara Beach this summer I was pleased to discover that Divi Resorts is obviously keen on maintaining its position in the dive resort pantheon and has made considerable improvements to the property. The dive fleet received a $200,000 refurbishment in the form of new engines for two of the boats and complete rebuilds on three others, as well as cosmetic enhancements such as fresh paint and new freshwater showers. The compressors have also been rebuilt and little things, such as new loaner gear bags, are positive signs of Divi's ongoing commitment. Other improvements sure to be noticed by Tiara Beach repeat guests are increased retail inventories of T-shirts and souvenirs, upgraded underwater photo and video systems and, for the rooms, new paint, furnishings and TV sets.



Five custom boats and an experienced staff ensure Divi Tiara guests see the best Cayman Brac/Little Cayman dive sites.

The Divi Tiara Beach Resort consists 59 hotel rooms. There are 24 standard accommodations; 22 deluxe units with TV and ocean view; and 13 luxury rooms with TV, ocean view and hottub. In addition, there are 12 timeshare one bedroom apartments. Yet talking about the nuts and bolts of the resort—things such as rooms or pool or conference center—fails to convey its true charm. My holiday memories at Tiara Beach are of pleasantries such as being able to open the door to my room to let my daughter build sand castles on the beach. Or, relaxing in a hammock overlooking the blue Caribbean or having a drink in the intimate beachside bar. Naturally, underwater photo services are a high priority to me and I notice the quality of E-6 film processing and the courtesy and professionalism of the resident photo pro. Fortunately, this has always been a high priority for Photo Tiara, Divi Tiara 's photo operation. As a result, Nikon has chosen this property to host both a Nikonos Shootout and the Nikon School of U/W Photography.

THE DIVING: Divi Tiara Beach Resort has never forgotten its primary clients are scuba divers and, to that end, it has established Dive Tiara. Its staff has 49 years of collective experience diving the reefs and walls of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, so they can ensure the dive choices offered are best suited to the day's prevailing wind and underwater visibility. Also, general manager Darren Law and dive operations manager Stevo Schwartz work closely together to ensure meal and dive boat schedules are in synch.

There are presently five custom dive boats in the fleet, four 40 foot boats and one 36 footer. A pair of 50 cfm compressors and 90,000 cubic feet of cascade air storage ensure ample fills for the aluminum 80s kept ready on the boat—guests never have to handle a tank. And, a new level of service has been added— gear will now be loaded onto each boat and the tanks setup by the time a diver steps aboard. After the dive, the gear will be offloaded, washed and returned to the guest gear storage area by the staff. I hate to seem overly lazy about such matters but it was a true pleasure to simply put my gear away in the mesh bag on the boat ride home and then step off the boat carrying only cameras, knowing my dive gear would be taken care of for me.

Of course, the most efficient dive resort in the world can't work unless the diving offers commensurate quality. Fortunately, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman offer some of the very best in the Caribbean. Besides the brand new wreck of a Russian warship, there are 56 moored dive sites accessible from the Divi Tiara Beach Resort, including traditional Cayman Brac favorites such as **Wilderness Wall**, **Cemetery Wall**, **Green House Reef**, **End of the Island** and **Anchor Wall**. The 330 foot long Russian wreck, rechristened the **Capt. *Keith Tibbetts***, was sunk in September. It sits upright in 58 to 80 feet of water and is completely intact, gun turrets and all. Also, a boat ride of 45 minutes to an hour delivers the gorgeous shallow walls of Little Cayman's **Bloody Bay** and **Jackson Bight**. These Little Cayman excursions are scheduled several times each week or even more often as weather and guest preference dictate.

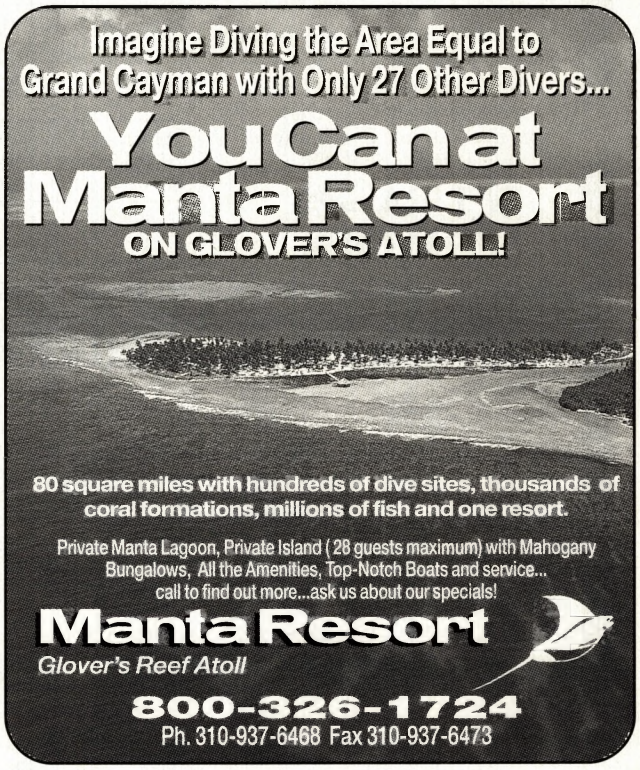
For more information about dive/lodging packages at the Divi Tiara Beach Resort, please phone (800) 367-3484, (919) 419-3484 or fax (919) 419-2075. To contact the resort directly on Cayman Brac, dial (809) 948-1553 or fax (809) 948-1316.

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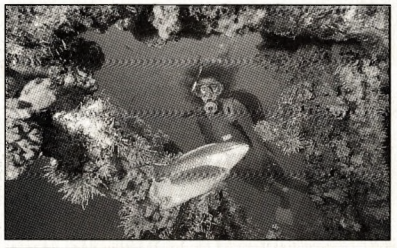
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MEMORABLE SHIPWRECKS

(Continued from Page 33)

carrying passengers. Captain William T. Turner paid no attention to the threats of disaster except to post extra lookouts. The *Lusitania* sailed at noon on May 1. By May 6, she was in a war zone off southwest Ireland. On the evening of May 6, the admiralty issued four warnings of U-boat activity in the area. The admiralty also ordered the *Lusitania* to zigzag, proceed at full speed and keep away from headlands. On the morning of May 7, two great egos clashed. Captain Turner refused to steam a zigzag course and slowed his vessel from full speed to 15 to 18 knots as he crept to within 12 miles of Old Head of Kinsale, Southern Ireland.

Running on the surface the skipper of the German U-boat *U-20* spotted the high masts of the *Lusitania* at a distance of 13 miles. He ordered the sub to submerge and headed at full speed on an intercepting course. Shortly after 2:00 pm the U-boat fired one bow torpedo. It struck the *Lusitania* on the starboard side and entered the hull before exploding. Almost instantly after the torpedo exploded there was an even larger explosion. Probably a boiler or coal dust in the bunkers exploded. The *Lusitania* sank, bow first, and landed on her starboard side. Eighteen minutes after being struck by one torpedo, the ship struck bottom 318 feet below. The dead and dying covered the water. Of the 1,959 persons on board, only 761 survived; 1,198 died. One hundred twenty-eight of the dead were Americans.

For the next 20 years, the *Lusitania* rested quietly on her starboard side. But did she? In the ensuing years there were stories but no proof of secret dives on the vessel by Italian teams. During the summer and early fall of 1935, a team of divers, reportedly testing a one atmosphere dive rig, made one successful test dive. This was with the J. S. Peress one atmosphere articulated diving bell. Diver Jim Jarrett made one test dive on the vessel with the modernized Peress rig. Oceaneering International made additional modifications to this dive rig and it became known as the Jim Suit after test diver Jim Jarrett.

In 1960, an American dive expedition, led by John Light, arrived to make a motion picture. Reported depth to the hull was 275 feet. Currents were strong and heavy surge hampered work. There was a 10 minute time limit at that depth and nitrogen narcosis plagued all divers. A shark bit one diver. A faulty European-made aluminum dive tank exploded and ruined the air compressor. One diver suffered a severe case of bends. The chamber air compressor developed

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problems and carbon monoxide entered the chamber. In spite of the problems, the Light expedition persisted for three years to make its film. One of the dive crew admitted he took some artifacts.

In 1982, Oceaneering International mounted a saturation diving expedition to perform salvage work on the liner. Reportedly, they made many interesting and valuable recoveries, including the ship's bell and the giant bronze propellers.

In 1994, a group of one dozen divers launched an expedition using mixed gas scuba. This venture was reportedly for media and photographic information.

Was the *Lusitania* carrying military cargo? Or was she an innocent passenger ship sunk by a stubborn sub skipper? The German captain logged it as he saw it, "The ship is made out to be a large passenger steamer." At least two divers reported seeing gun emplacements on the vessel. When efforts were made to photograph the "guns" strong currents and other problems caused the dive to be aborted. Perhaps in the future a group of curious divers with enough capitol, nerve and curiosity will find the answer to the question. Does it matter? The sinking of the *Lusitania* was not the cause of the U.S. entering WW I. That event did not occur until nearly three years later.

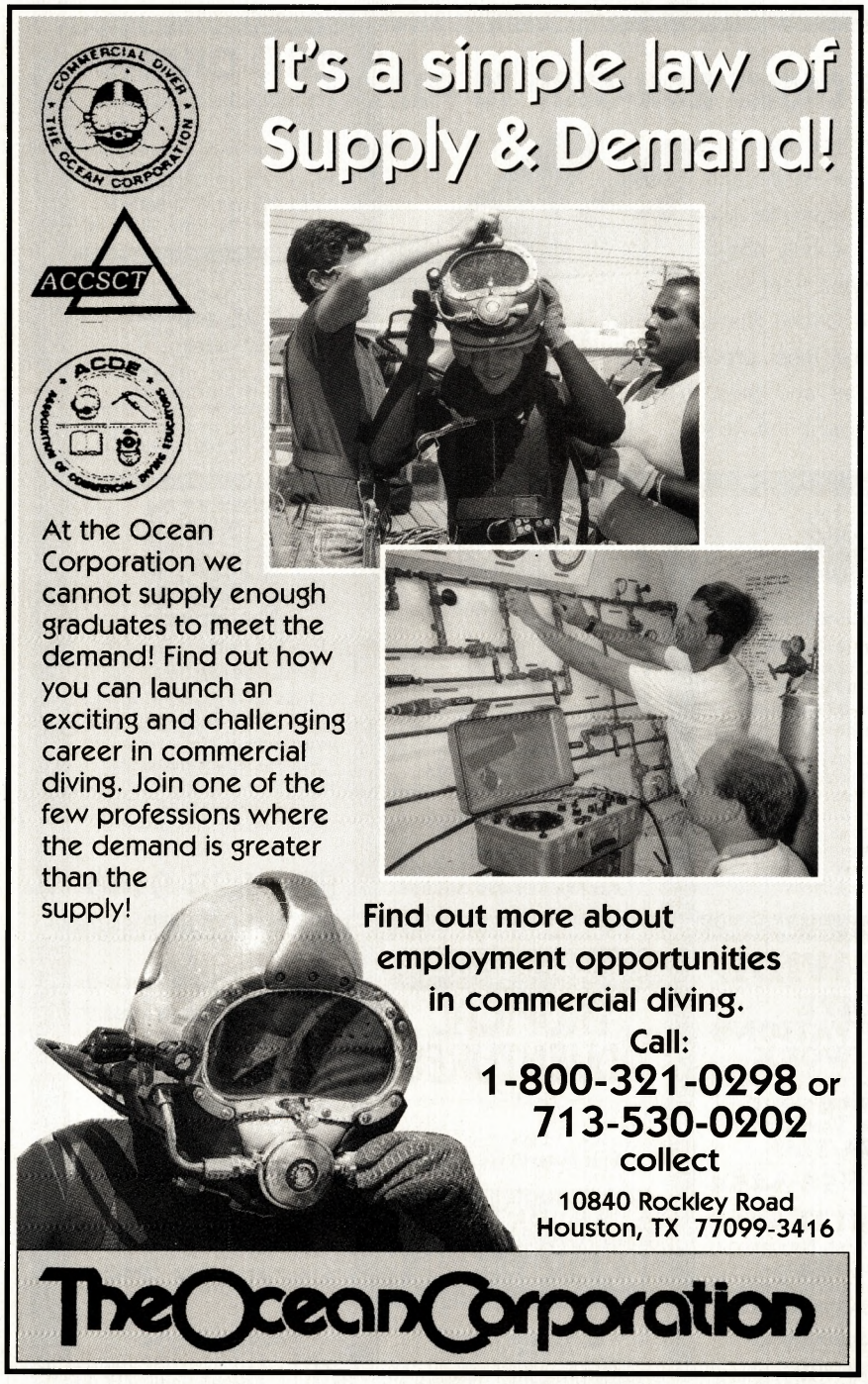
THE BATTLESHIP *BISMARCK*

The German battleship *Bismarck* was launched at Hamburg on February 14, 1939. Two years later, in the spring of 1941, she was ready for sea. She was more than 800 feet long and displaced 53,000 tons. Her main armament was three turrets, each with three 15 inch guns. She could fire projectiles, each weighing one ton, a distance of 20 miles. She was one of the most powerful battleships ever built yet her life as an active warship lasted just two weeks.

In early 1941, Great Britain and Germany were involved in WW II. It was essential for victory that Germany blockade maritime traffic to the British Isles. For survival, it was equally important that Britain keep her sea lanes open for critically needed supplies. Grand Admiral of the German Navy, Erich Raeder, had stationed German maritime raiders all across the Atlantic Ocean. Also, there were some patrolling the Pacific shipping lanes. They sank thousands of tons of vital shipping. Admiral Raeder ordered the recently launched *Bismarck* and the cruiser *Prince Eugen*, then in German waters, to sea to replace two disabled raiders. En route along the coast of Norway, aircraft spotted the two German ships. The British Admiralty ordered the battleship *Prince of Wales* and the battle cruiser *Hood* to intercept and sink the German vessels.

Three days later, on May 24, the four vessels met and clashed. In a battle that lasted about eight minutes, the damaged *Prince of Wales* fled the scene. The battle cruiser *Hood* apparently took a salvo in her after magazines and exploded. She sank within a few minutes with a loss of 1,338. Only three of her crew survived the sinking. The *Bismarck*, hit and damaged, continued on a southerly course to try to reach safety in a French port.

On May 26, still 600 miles off the French port of Brest, the *Prince Eugen* had sortied on a commerce raid. The *Bismarck* slowed to await her return. Later that day, planes from the British carrier *Ark Royal* spotted the *Bismarck*. Bombs and torpedoes from planes caused additional damage. One torpedo struck her rudders and damaged them. The giant battlewagon could no longer maneuver. The following day, May 27, British warships arrived and, with guns and torpedoes, began demolishing the German vessel. The design of her compartments and her construction supposedly made her unsinkable. Additional tor-



pedoes from the cruiser *Tartar* slammed into the *Bismarck*. The *Bismarck* sank rapidly in 16,000 feet of water, with a loss of 1,900 lives. The British cruiser *Dorsetshire* rescued some 400 of her crew only to abandon the nearly 2,000 men still in the water when a German submarine entered the area.

The *Bismarck* sank quickly. There were no efforts made to locate the vessel for the next 48 years. In the summer of 1988, a research team began an unsuccessful search for the vessel. There was a second expedition in the summer of 1989. The research team picked up a debris trail in early June. This was followed until the main hull of the *Bismarck* was located. Apparently she had rolled over as she sank. Her main gun turrets fell out as she rolled but the vessel landed upright on the muddy bottom with only a slight list to port.

THE *ANDREA DORIA*

The wreckage of the *Andrea Doria* is the Mt. Everest of wreck diving. Similar to that famous mountain, this wreck has killed some who have challenged its hazards. At least six divers have died on the *Doria* in the four decades she has been rotting away on the bottom.

If ever there was a collision that should not have happened it is that of the *Stockholm* and the *Andrea Doria*. The collision occurred about an hour before midnight on July 25, 1956. The vessels were in the open sea about 55 nautical miles south of the Nantucket lightship. Bridge personnel had radar contact with each other for 15 to 20 minutes before the crash. The 565 foot *Stockholm* was on course 091 at a speed of 18 knots. The larger and faster *Andrea Doria* (697 feet long) was on course 264 at a speed of 21.8 knots. Very nearly dead ahead of each other on opposite courses they were closing at a relative speed of almost 40 knots. This represents a closing speed of about 4,000 feet per minute—two nautical miles in three minutes. Each vessel was able to see the others running lights when they were about 0.5 to 2 minutes apart. The officers of the deck had very little time to decide what to do.

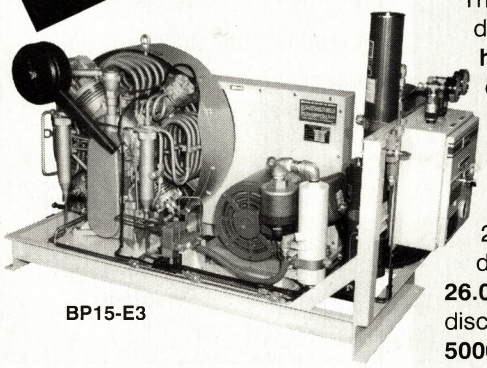
Both vessels changed course in such a way that made collision inevitable. The *Stockholm*'s bow crashed into the starboard side of the *Andrea Doria* about amidships. She suffered 44 casualties, most of whom died on the initial impact. The *Andrea Doria* sank 11 hours after the collision on July 26, 1956. The *Stockholm* made port under her own power. There was no determination as to the degree of fault for each vessel.

The *Andrea Doria* lies in 240 feet of water on her damaged starboard side with her bow slightly elevated. Depth at the highest part of the hull, believed to be

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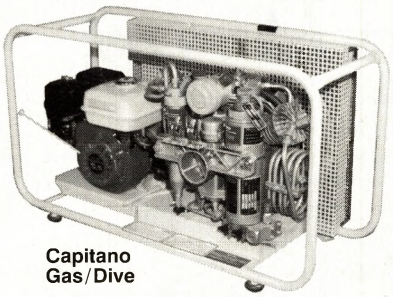
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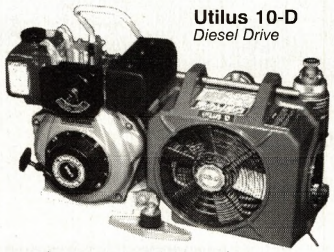


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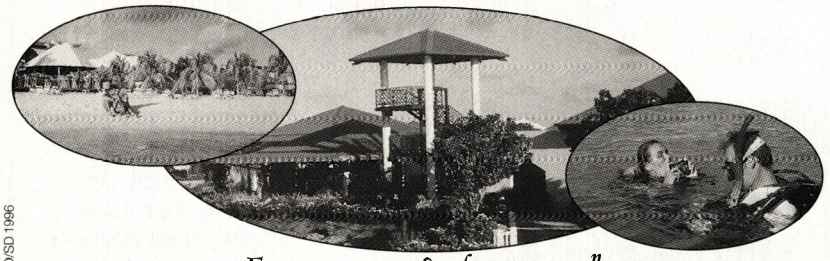
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the port side of the bridge structure, is 170 feet.

Life Magazine for September 17, 1956, reported that on the next day, July 27, "two amateur divers" made a dive to the *Andrea Doria*. The two divers were definitely not amateurs. Divers Peter Gimbel and Joseph Fox had many years of wreck diving experience. A dive to the *Doria* using the open circuit scuba of 40 years ago is comparable to an assault on Mt. Everest without special support equipment or a support team. Their *Doria* mission was to bring back a series of black and white photos. Those first photos of the wreck appeared in the August 6 and August 13 issues of Life.

The next expedition to the *Andrea Doria* was an assignment by Life Magazine to bring back a series of color photographs of the wrecked vessel. Magazine editor Kenneth MacLeish and Peter Gimbel led the dive crew. Experienced West Coast divers Bob Dill, L.A. County lifeguard Ramsey Parks and Earl Murray of Scripps Institute of Oceanography, completed the dive crew. Lieutenant Commander James E. Stark, USN, Medical Corps, on leave from the Navy, provided technical assistance for the dive. A chartered 50 foot cruiser was their base of operations.

The descending line landed on the side of the wreck below and aft the bridge structure. The divers penetrated several compartments as they swam upward toward the bridge. They also swam along an elevator shaft, sighted scattered luggage of passengers and recovered one suitcase. The suitcase was eventually returned to the owner, a passenger who survived the sinking. Life Magazine carried a color photo report of this dive in its September 17, 1956, issue. An excellent, more complete report of this dive, written by Ramsey Parks, appeared in the June 1957 SKIN DIVER Magazine.

More than 100 divers have since visited the *Doria*. A few have made many dives on the wreck. At least one person has reportedly made more than 100 dives on her. The ultimate goal of a wreck diver is photography or artifacts. Wrecks offer many opportunities for both; especially the *Andrea Doria*. Experienced divers who can listen to the sounds of the sea and of the wreck report the *Doria* is noisy, often emitting groans and the sounds of bangs and scrapes. These could be from movement owing to strong currents, settling, pieces of the vessel falling into the depths owing to corrosion or the change in buoyancy owing to air trapped in compartments.

Dive Notes

Bob Soto's Tears Down The Price Barrier: For the first time, Bob Soto's Diving has managed to tear down the Grand Cayman winter price barrier by slashing dive vacation package prices to a rate $100 below summer rates!

Celebrating 40 years in the resort diving business, Bob Soto's wanted to do something "very, very special" for the dive traveler in 1997, according to Soto's president, Ron Kipp. As the creator of Scubabowl, the Guaranteed Dive Vacation and Cayman Madness, Kipp wanted to offer a significant diving vacation bargain during the normally "high and pricey season."

Kipp approached the Treasure Island Resort with a proposal to devote 10 rooms per day (20 divers/double occupancy) at a bargain price during the peak winter season. Long time associate Cayman Airways also agreed to devote 20 airline seats to the program. Bob Soto's reduced the price of its summer packages to an all-time low for the winter dive package (January 1 through April 14, 1997).

A four day/three night/two days of diving package is only $499, including airfare from Miami. The five night package is $699 and the favorite, eight days/seven nights/six days of diving, is only $899. This is a savings of $200 to $600 per person compared to other packages.

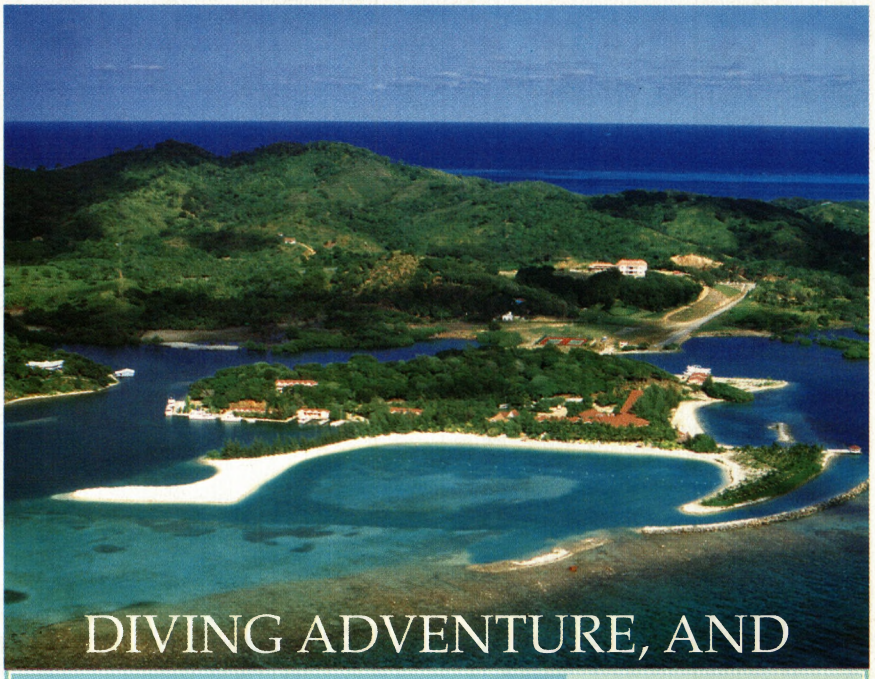
Every diver gets a two tank dive every full day, a night or afternoon one tank dive and unlimited shore diving. Cayman airport transfers and all dive transportation is included, as are taxes and service charges.

Accommodations (double occupancy) are at the Treasure Island Resort, the new headquarters of Bob Soto's Diving. It features the only hotel based PADI Five Star Development Center, recently opened by Bob Soto's Diving, three bars, two pools, three restaurants, a shopping arcade and full service dive shop.

Cayman Airways, a diver's airline, flies into Cayman three times daily from Miami. A nominal upgrade for the package is available on regularly scheduled Cayman Airways flights from Tampa, Orlando, Atlanta and Houston. Add-on airfare from your originating city is available, often at low preferential rates, when booked through Bob Soto's.

Known as one of the finest diving destinations in the world, Bob Soto's Diving takes its customers another step toward awesome diving with a reputation for outstanding customer service.

For more information or reservations, call (800) BOB SOTO, fax (345) 949-8731 or e-mail bobsotos@candw.ky.



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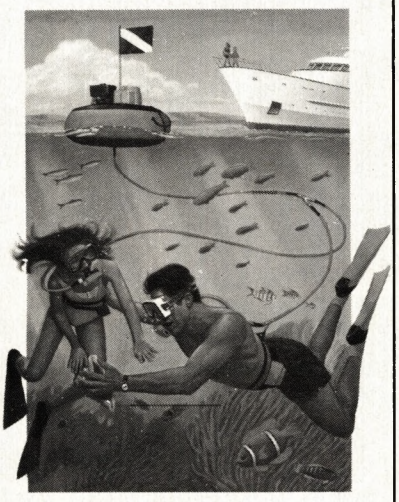
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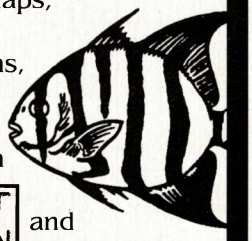
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Fisher M-Scope Impulse

All the Benefits of Pulse Induction Without the Drawbacks



photos/Bonnie J. Cardone

BY TAMARA COLLINS

The Impulse is available with an 8 or 10½ inch search coil and has permanently attached headphones. The control panel (inset above) has adjustment knobs for tuning/battery test and volume/power. The LCD and LED measure signal strength.

Avid treasure hunters and professional salvors require a specialized tool for their craft. They need a sensitive device, with a fast target response, that can detect metal at maximum depths, whether the user sweeps at a fast speed or holds the detector perfectly still. It is also important for a metal detector to be sensitive to gold and silver, have a long battery life and be constructed of rugged, non-corrodible materials that can withstand the destructive elements of sun, sand and salt.

The Fisher M-Scope Impulse fulfills all the requirements of the professional, with some added features that benefit the amateur beachcomber and U/W treasure hunter as well. It is a sophisticated instrument, using pulse induction technology, but its controls are stripped down to the bare essentials, making it easy to operate and user-friendly. It also has a friendly price. The Impulse can be purchased with an 8 inch coil for $900 or with a 10½ inch coil for $920.

The Impulse can be used on land, on the beach, in fresh water or in the ocean down to 250 feet. Pulse induction is the technology that makes it ideally suited for use in or near the ocean. This method of transmitting and receiving signals from buried metal allows it to virtually ignore salt, which is extremely conductive when wet, and penetrate black sand and some highly mineralized soils that are inherent in the marine environment.

In the past, pulse induction detectors had some drawbacks. They were heavy, needed frequent tuning, required slow sweep speeds to maximize sensitivity and depth and had a high battery drain. The Impulse is the Fisher engineers' answer to the challenges of pulse induction technology. It is rugged, lightweight and well balanced, with a fiberglass upper stem, fiberglass reinforced injection molded ABS plastic lower stem and a search coil potted in solid epoxy. It measures 50 inches fully extended and collapses to 31 inches, the best length for diver use. Topside, it weighs only 5.2 pounds (with the 8 inch coil); it is slightly positive underwater. There is an optional brass clip-on sinker assembly available for $18 that adds 11.5 ounces to the detector and makes it negatively buoyant.

The Impulse is comfortable to use, with padding on the stainless steel armrest, headphones and handgrip. To reduce the possibility of arm fatigue, land or shallow water treasure hunters can remove the control housing from the shaft and mount it on their belt, taking some of the weight off the handle.

The Impulse's simplicity of operation will be encouraging to amateurs and a refreshing change for professionals. The control housing has only two adjustment knobs—the tuner/battery test control, which adjusts the threshold level and can be set to view battery strength; and the volume control, which also turns the detector off.

Once the Impulse has been tuned to its maximum sensitivity and the volume is adjusted for comfort, the treasure hunting can begin. The user can sweep the open center spider coil (electro-static insulated to reduce certain types of false signals) quickly, slowly or hold it still over a crack or crevice in the reef. When metal is sensed, the user is notified in three ways: a liquid crystal display (LCD) bar graph that rises with an increase in signal strength; a flashing LED; and a signal emitted through the headphones that increases in pitch and volume as the center of the search coil passes over the target.

As would be expected from an amphibious metal detector, the Impulse's high quality, Piezo Electric headphones are submersible. To assist in pressure equalization, each earphone has a tethered drain plug that should be removed during descent and ascent. The headset is adjustable to accommodate different head sizes and permanently attached to the control housing via a durable coiled cable.

The high impact ABS injection molded plastic control housing is also the Impulse's powerhouse. It holds eight 1.5 volt AA penlight batteries, which supply power for up to 50 hours continuous use with carbon zinc batteries and even longer with alkalines.

It took Fisher, a company with more than 60 years of engineering expertise, to raise the quality of pulse induction technology to the standards that treasure hunters demand. If you want a metal detector that will give you an advantage over the other guys, contact Fisher Research Laboratory for more information or dealer locations. You can write to 200 W. Willmott Road, Los Banos, CA 93635, call (209) 826-3292 or fax (209) 826-0416.

USER COMMENTS

Manual: "The Impulse's manual is clear, concise and full of useful tips for operation."

Setup: "The detector requires minor assembly. Attaching the search coil to the lower stem is simple. Adjusting the stem and armrest to their appropriate position for me was also easy."

Operation: "The Impulse is lightweight and comfortable to hold. Tuning and detection are made easy by the stripped down control panel, with just two knobs for adjustment, an LCD and LED. The signal comes through the headphones loud and clear."



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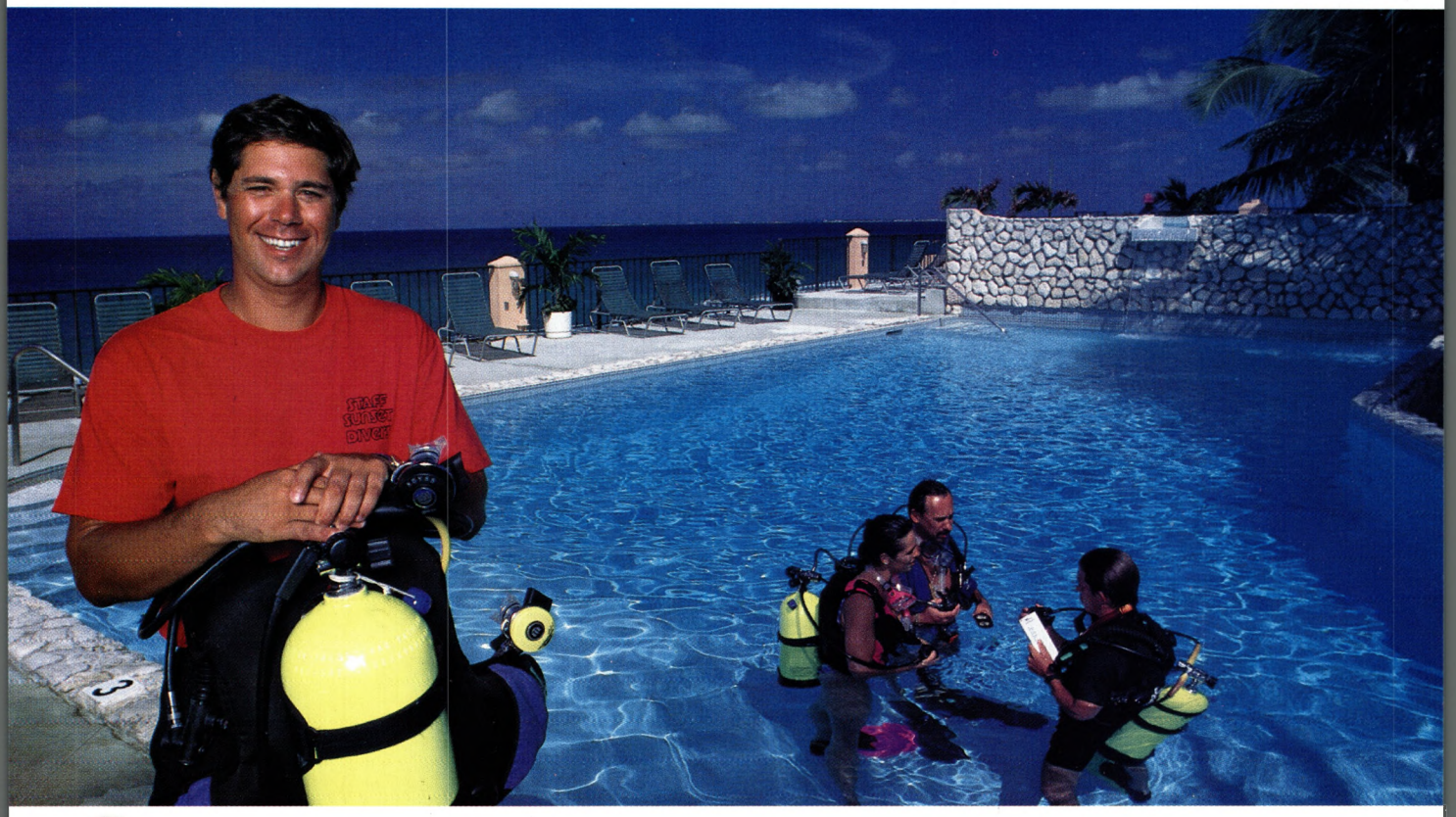
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Well, as dive hotels go we **have** been around for a while. Yet we've always welcomed divers of every certification level. If you're a beginner you'll find our instructors ready and willing to help you take the first steps to becoming an open-water diver. Advanced divers love Sunset House for the excitement of all-day, three tank diving on some of the most remote walls of Grand Cayman. All of our guests,

To divers, Sunset House is a real institution (only you don't have to be certified to stay here)







though, rave about the no-hassle, unlimited shore diving right off the hotel's back yard. And you might not believe it, but some folks say there's more to a vacation than just diving. So for them we created other wonderful distractions. Like our first-class 'Sea Harvest' restaurant, the renowned Cathy Church Photo Centre and what many locals would say is Cayman's best bar. So whether you're a certified diver or just dream about being one, Sunset House is the place for your next vacation. Call us today for rates on 1-800 854 4767 or 809 949 7111 (8am-5pm EST). Or write us at Sunset House, PO Box 479, Grand Cayman, BWI. CIWEA

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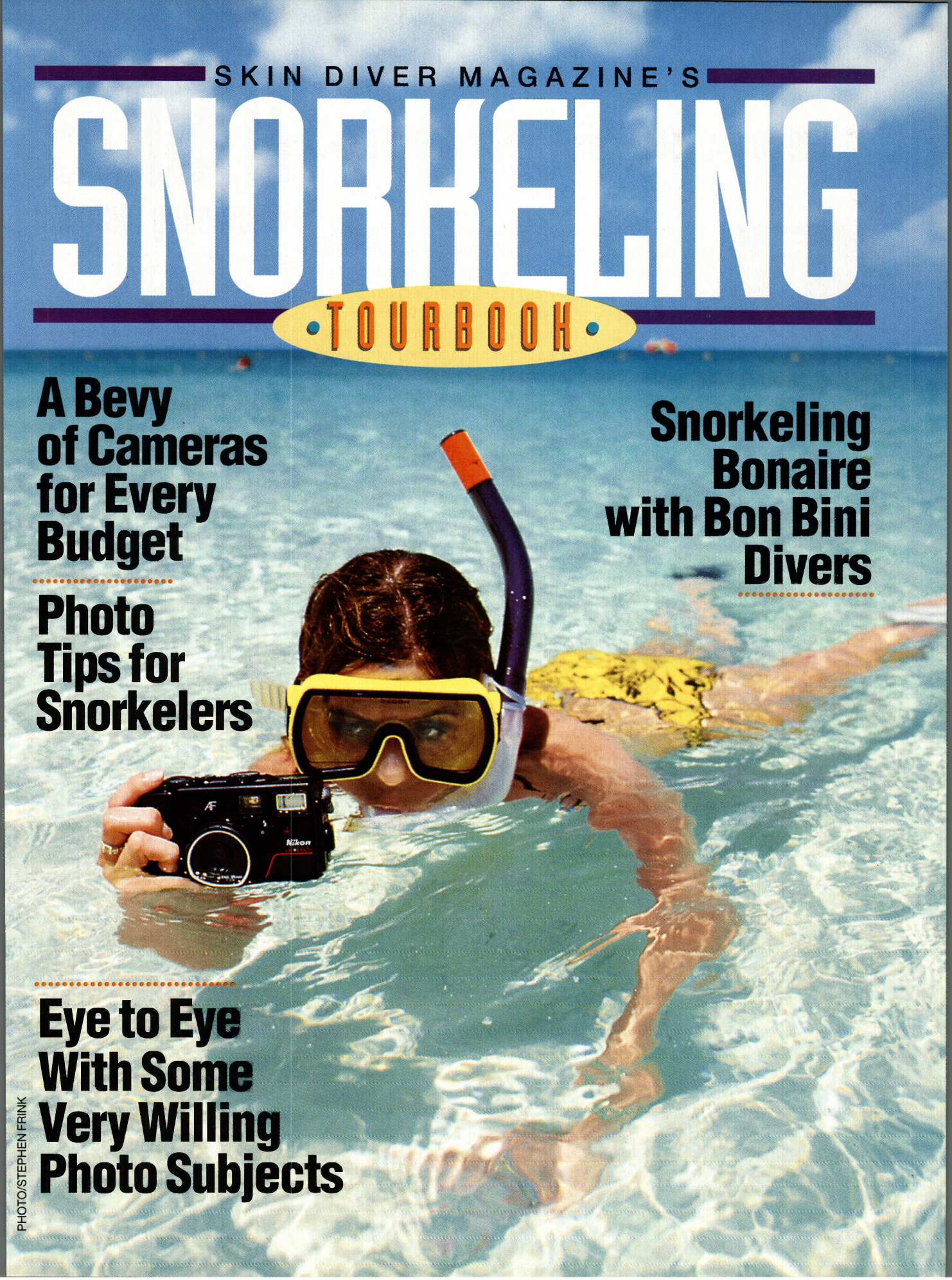
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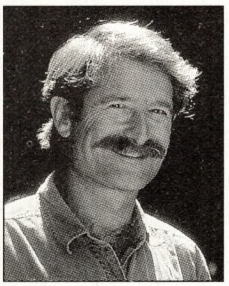
Eye to Eye With Some Very Willing Photo Subjects



PHOTO/STEPHEN FRINK

The Joys of Snorkeling with a Camera

BY JOEL SIMON



After a lecture during a recent snorkeling workshop, Gloria approached me all smiles and full of enthusiasm. Proudly handing me a stack of 4 by 6 inch prints, she said, "Here they are, my first underwater pictures. What do you think of these!" We sat down at a table and I began to look through the images.

What I saw was a succession of pictures of one blue fish, dreadfully out of focus, sometimes missing head or tail or altogether hidden behind stands of dimly lit coral. Yet, when I occasionally glanced at Gloria, I saw delighted contentment, excitement and satisfaction. Clearly, what she was seeing were her crystal clear recollections of a wondrous journey through an aquatic realm filled with life and color.

Although her snapshots weren't going to win any contests, to Gloria they were all prize winners. That prize lay in the proof of her ability to observe the underwater world, master basic snorkeling skills and use photography to add another dimension to her overall enjoyment of the sea.

She's not alone. Many snorkeiers today are using cameras and producing wonderful images. As you will read in our Gearbag section, there's literally a camera for everyone, from the inexpensive, single use models to the most sophisticated professional setups. In Tips and Techniques you will learn how to use these tools effectively.

Snorkeiers can take superb underwater photos. Generally, the more competent and comfortable you are in the water, the easier it will be to concentrate on photography. As your snorkeling skills improve, so will the quality of your images.

Part of the inherent joy of snorkeling is learning to observe the marine environment carefully. Using a camera can help us focus attention on specific elements of a coral reef. Gloria's blurred photos of the blue fish proved her skill at following this single creature during its routine activities. Through the exercise she noticed territorial behavior, feeding strategies and interactions with its neighbors. With time and practice, her photographic skills will increase along with her knowledge of the reef. And, using a camera will keep the process educational and enjoyable.

Using a camera also encourages snorkeiers to take a closer look at the details of a reef. Taking photos of smaller areas that include anemones, sponges and corals can be particularly rewarding. Many creatures survive by use of cryptic coloration, making them difficult to notice. Upon careful examination, it's not uncommon to see more animals in a picture than you saw when you took it.

Photographs are also instrumental in identifying marine life, especially fish. During workshops, one of our favorite activities is looking through fish books to identify the fish in a photograph taken by a snorkeler. This is one of the most enjoyable and educational ways to learn the subtle variations that differentiate one fish from another. Photography soon leads to a more thorough understanding of specific species, as well as their ecological relationships in the coral reef community.

Perhaps the most important aspect of underwater photography is simply that it's fun. I enjoy taking photos as a visual celebration of the underwater aesthetic. Even after years of snorkeling, the undersea world remains full of visual treats and putting them on film is an ongoing and delightful challenge.

Besides, everyone enjoys having a few underwater snapshots of themselves and their buddies just to show friends and family back home. I often see snorkeling buddies exchanging cameras and enthusiastically taking pictures of one another. This is by far the easiest way to get images of yourself in and under the water. It's true that sometimes you might end up missing a fin or a head but, as Gloria proved, it doesn't take a great photograph to bring back a great memory.

Inside Snorkeling Tourbook

Brought to you by:
Joel Simon, **Editor**
Tamara Collins, **Executive Editor**
Susan Grube, **Art Director**
Stephen Frink, **Contributing Editor**

Snorkeler's Gearbag



Capture the U/W World on Film: A Bevy of Cameras for Every Budget

Tips and Techniques



Shallow Water Photography: A Few Tips for Snorkelers

Life on a Shallow Reef



Fish Portraits: Eye to Eye With Some Very Willing Photo Subjects

Bon Voyage



Snorkeling Bonaire: Bon Bini Divers Shows You The Way

Capture the U/W World on Film:

A Bevy of Cameras for Every Budget

BY TAMARA COLLINS

The accoutrements of travel should always include a camera. The vacation memories from one to two weeks of stolen time fade quickly as people are again immersed in the reality of their everyday lives. But, if captured by the camera's lens, those memories can be relived and shared for years to come.

When your activities include exploring the provocative and alien world of the sea, a camera becomes even more significant. There are such incredible colors, nuances of light and odd and fascinating creatures that you will never be able to accurately portray them with words. A camera and a little expertise will provide you with the tools to hold onto those images forever.

There is a bewildering array of U/W cameras on the market. We have listed six that range in price from $800 to $14.95. The more expensive, professional quality camera will yield the best results, with a number of features, settings and accessories that give the skilled photographer creative control. The snapshot quality cameras are more accessible to beginning U/W photographers on a budget. All of these cameras will perform some of the more complicated tasks for you and can capture beautiful images, perfect for the family photo album.

The phone number of each manufacturer is listed in the sidebars. Call soon for more information and the address of your nearest dealer so you can begin assembling a lifetime of snorkeling memories.

IN BRIEF

Nikon Nikonos V



Maximum depth: 160 feet
Lens: Interchangeable
Flash: Separate
Comments: Professional quality amphibious camera with automatic and manual exposure controls; TTL metering; view finder LED display; several interchangeable lenses and other accessories are available.
Price: $800 (camera and 35mm lens)
Phone: (800) 645-6687

Sea & Sea Motormarine MX-10



Maximum depth: 99 feet
Lens: Fixed, 32mm f/4.5
Flash: Built-in; accessory flash available (as shown).
Comments: Snapshot quality amphibious camera with auto film advance; power rewind; door and shutter lock.
Price: $413 (camera only)
Phone: (619) 929-1909

Canon Sureshot A-1



Maximum depth: 16.4 feet
Lens: Fixed, 32mm f/3.5
Flash: Built-in, with red-eye reduction
Comments: Snapshot quality amphibious camera with fully automatic exposure control and film handling; oversized viewfinder; one-touch macro mode.
Price: $310
Phone: (516) 488-6700

IN BRIEF

Pioneer Research Sealife Sport Diver



Maximum depth: 60 feet
Lens: Fixed, 35mm f/5.6
Flash: Built-in
Comments: Snapshot quality camera and housing with deep dive switch; automatic film winder; focus-free lens system; "space suit" design, flexible housing.
Price: $99
Phone: (800) 257-7742

Ikelite Aquashot II



Maximum depth: 125 feet
Camera: Flash and non-flash versions of single use Kodak FunSaver and Fuji QuickSnap Plus (cameras not included)
Flash: Accessory available
Comments: Snapshot quality housing with single use camera; optical grade glass lens; built-in hand grip with lanyard; many accessories available.
Price: $80 (housing only)
Phone: (317) 923-4523

Kodak FunSaver Weekend 35



Maximum depth: 12 feet
Lens: Fixed
Flash: Built-in
Comments: Snapshot quality single use camera in protective housing; wrist strap; focus free lens; 27 exposures.
Price: $14.95
Phone: (800) 242-2424

Fish Portraits:

Eye to Eye With Some Very Willing Photo Subjects

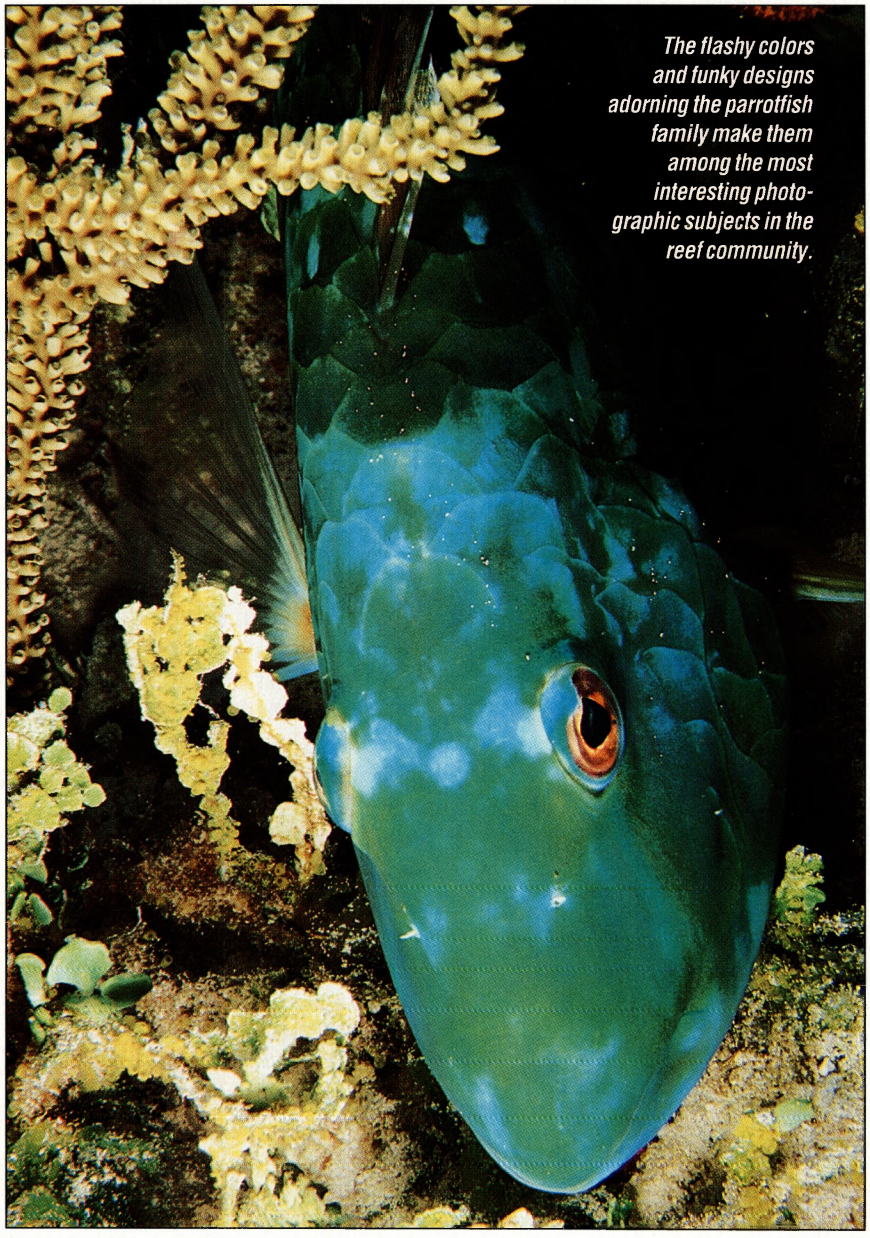
TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAMMY PELUSO

When underwater exploration turns from sometime hobby to recurring pastime, many fishwatchers turn to underwater photography. Some aspiring U/W photographers hope to have their work published, others enter contests and plaster colorful memories on the walls of their homes and offices. All learn after the first or second roll of film that watching fish and taking pictures of fish are two entirely different matters.

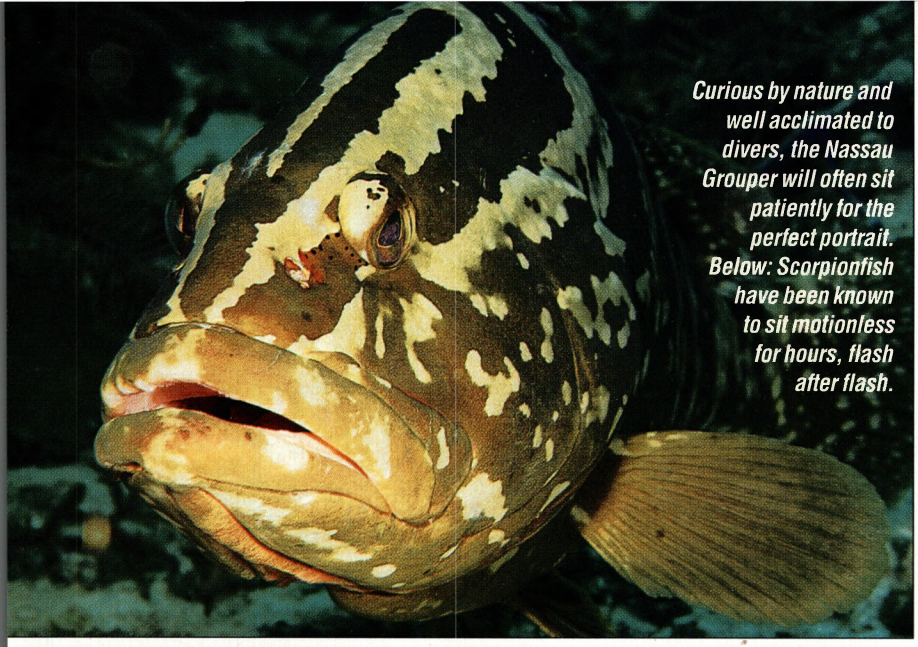
Today's auto-everything cameras make it fairly simple to just point and shoot and end up with pictures of fish that are well lit and identifiable. But the key element that separates photos taken by novices from those taken by experts is eye contact. While a fish may swim right up to you and look you in the eye, typically, you need to get on the fishes' level and become a part of their world for a little while. It is this connection that transforms good photos into great ones, inviting the viewer into the fishes' world.

The starting point in successful fish photography is knowing what you're looking for. Fish photographers are just hunters in disguise, both watch and wait for that prefect moment when everything lines up. We've all heard the expression "don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes," this theory is especially applicable to underwater photography. The first thing any hunter will tell you is to learn all you can about your target. Zero in on a few likely candidates and find out all you can. Where do they eat? When do they sleep? Where do they live? Where do they hide?

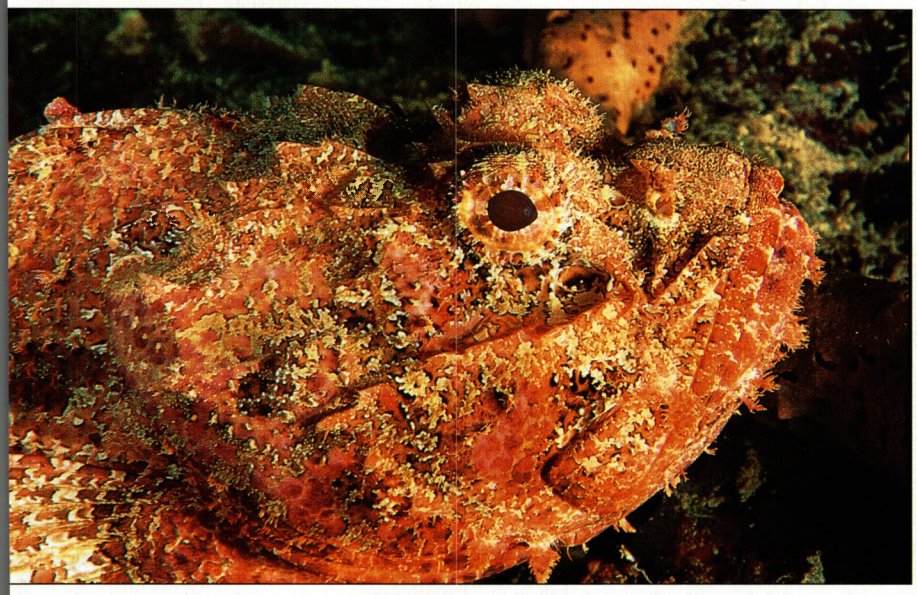
The bottom line is, unless you have food there are few fish that are going to willingly pose for portraits; most instinctively swim the other way. There are, however, some fish



The flashy colors and funky designs adorning the parrotfish family make them among the most interesting photographic subjects in the reef community.



Curious by nature and well acclimated to divers, the Nassau Grouper will often sit patiently for the perfect portrait. Below: Scorpionfish have been known to sit motionless for hours, flash after flash.



that are a bit more cooperative than others, especially near the surface. Many beginning photographers are lured into thinking fish photography is easy when they find themselves enveloped by thick clouds of Blue Tangs or eye to eye with a six foot toothy Barracuda. French Angelfish, decked out in elegant black and gold suits, will often boldly approach divers and snorkelers at the surface. While these easy targets are great for starters, eventually you're going to want to go below the surface and photograph more elusive subjects.

If you want to learn the basics of eye to eye contact a good place to start is with a subject that won't swim away; scour the seafloor and find yourself a nice sedentary Scorpionfish. Barring the occasional shy one, most Scorpionfish will sit motionless for hours, flash after flash. Unless extremely provoked, they rarely swim away.

There are several different Scorpionfish found in the Caribbean, ranging in color from drab brown to brilliant yellow. The common varieties, such as the Spotted Scorpionfish and Barbfish, are a mottled mixture of reds, pinks and browns. Scorpionfish rely on camouflage for protection and often mimic the rocks in their surroundings. They also have poisonous spines and can inflict a powerful sting; painful to humans and deadly to the fishes' prey.

Typically, Scorpionfish are bottom dwellers and are found on both sand and rocky terrain. Occasionally you'll find them a bit higher on the reef, resting on a sponge or lurking in a dark corner, waiting for an unsuspecting victim to swim by.

One the most cooperative models and a definite must for any photographer's wall or archive is the Nassau Grouper and its relatives, including the Red and Rock Hind, Graysby, Coney, Soapfish and the giant Jewfish. Groupers, curious by nature, have become amazingly acclimated to divers and most are incredibly easy to photograph. In many locations they will come right up to divers and snorkelers and follow them around, staring longfully with big puppy-dog eyes. I have yet to see any other fish just sit there and allow a photographer to put a framer over its face!

Groupers and Jewfish vary greatly in both color and size. Most groupers are between two and four feet long; Jewfish can grow to lengths of eight feet and weigh as much as 700 pounds. Groupers display a varied assortment of spots, stripes and blotches, which can change drastically when they move or when they are startled. They also undergo great changes as they make the transition from juvenile to adult. Bold vertical stripes and a dark band that runs through its eye make the Nassau Grouper easily identifiable and distinguishable from its look alike cousin the Red Grouper. Although groupers occasionally cruise the open water, more often than not you'll find them lurking in the shadowy crevices of the reef. Despite their size, groupers are masters of disguise.

A little trickier to photograph but well worth the effort are parrotfish, available in more than a dozen flashy colors and designs. You probably heard parrotfish before you saw them; they crunch algae laden coral with their parrotlike beaks, leaving behind streams of powdery sand. Extreme color changes make parrotfish among the most interesting fish in the reef community. There are three unique color phases: juvenile, adult and male secondary. Most females have the ability to change into males and typically the males sport the brighter colors and more elaborate designs.

For the most part you will find parrotfish grazing nonstop on shallow reefs during the day. Although not exactly "photo friendly" they are fairly tolerant of snorkelers and somewhat single minded. Parrotfish are simple creatures of habit and not easily distracted from their feeding patterns. With careful planning you can cut them off as they round a corner and look them square in the eye. The easiest time to get parrotfish photos is at night, when they retreat to the shelter of the reef. Parrotfish excrete a mucous-like substance from their mouth and wrap themselves in a transparent cocoon.

No matter what fish you photograph or camera you use the same rules and opportunities apply: If you want great portraits look your subject in the eye.

Shallow Water Photography:

A Few Tips for Snorkelers

BY TAMMY PELUSO

When it comes to underwater photography, being a snorkeler has both benefits and disadvantages. Snorkelers possess an invaluable trait those on scuba lack: the ability to be completely silent. Underwater, most fish and critters are meals waiting to happen. It's understandable the locals are skittish, especially when confronted with giant, scary looking bubble blowing divers.

The biggest photo obstacle that snorkelers must overcome is avoiding the downward shooting angle, natural to snorkeling. This is especially true in shallow water, where many fish are close to the surface. It takes a little effort but, with practice, it's fairly easy to tip the camera so you are shooting your subject horizontally or, ideally, at a slight upward angle. This makes the photos look more natural. Although there are some exceptions, sunstreaked blue water is almost always better than a dark or sandy background.

The next thing to consider is the proper exposure. If you want the blue water to be an element in your photo it's important to take a meter reading on the water and adjust the strobe to subject distance accordingly. Take a close look at the photos in this magazine; with the exception of macro and close-up photos, all have bright blue backgrounds. Remember, pictures need to tell a story; if you don't capture the blue water, you might as well be on a night dive.

After you learn the skills needed to take the photos, the real fun begins—you need to find cooperative subjects. Although many photo opportunities will swim up to you on the surface, the majority of fish and critters will stay closer to the reef, even in shallow water. If you want to take photos of the reef's myriad colorful inhabitants on snorkel, you're going to have to do some free diving. If you've never tried breath hold diving before it's best to seek the expertise of a local free diving guide, he or she will show you techniques that will enable you to safely venture into the underworld. With practice, many snorkelers can stay below for more than three minutes at a time. Until you get a handle on the basics, it's probably best to leave your camera behind.



PHOTO/STEPHEN FRINK

Once you've decided on a photographic subject, remember to shoot horizontally or at a slight up angle for a more natural picture.

The unobtrusive nature of free diving allows you to get close to your subjects but even accomplished free divers can tire after excessive dives. It's best to locate your subjects from the surface, then stay and watch for awhile. Fish are simple creatures of habit and before long you'll notice a definite pattern. You'll have the best luck photographically if you can anticipate your subjects' actions and get there ahead of time. It's best to preset your camera on the surface so when you get below you can focus all your attention on your subject and not waste precious time. Most importantly, set yourself up for success by choosing snorkeling sites where the reefs are close to the surface.

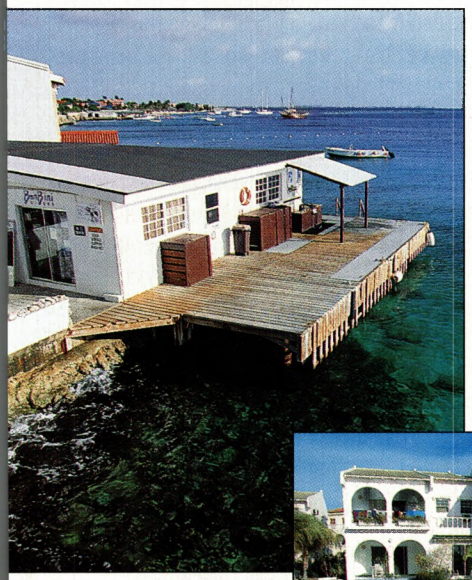
To get great fish photos you don't have to be a diver. Photo opportunities are infinite at any depth, especially in shallow water.



Snorkeling Bonaire:

Bon Bini Divers Shows You the Way

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOEL SIMON





Each year more than 27,000 people come to the small Dutch island of Bonaire to dive. And with good cause—calm, clear, warm water, filled with friendly fish is an enticing attraction. To this equation add the extensive shallow regions of Bonaire's fringing reefs and you'll understand why this island is enjoying enormous popularity with the snorkelers of the world as well as the divers.

For this reason, many of Bonaire's dive operators are catering to the growing number of snorkelers. At the forefront of this movement is Bon Bini Divers. Although, as the name suggests, this operation has offered full scuba diving services for many years, it is the commitment to snorkeling that merits special attention.

Top left: The Bon Bini Divers shop maintains a dedicated snorkeling center with a full line of equipment. Top inset: The relaxing pool area of the Lion's Dive Resort.

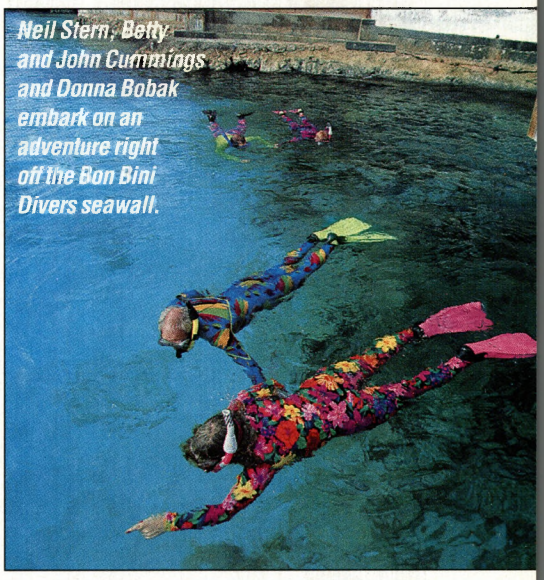
When I walked into the tidy waterfront store on the premises of the new Lion's Dive Resort (formerly the Coral Regency), I was greeted by a smiling face and cheerful eyes. "Hi, I'm Susan Davis, the resident manager. How can I help you?" When I asked about snorkeling, she had all the answers.

"At first we were surprised by the number of requests we received from people to go snorkeling but now we've come to expect it....It's this interest that has given us the motivation to evolve services especially tailored to snorkelers."

Among those services is a broad inventory of gear, including lightweight inflatable vests, fins in sizes guaranteed to fit the largest foot, wetsuits for kids and sea kayaks.

"The kayaks are a great addition to the more traditional gear," says Susan. "They are easy to use and really extend the mobility of snorkelers. Just put your mask and fins in the space in front of your feet and paddle anywhere you wish." She pointed toward the front window, to a view featuring two bright plastic kayaks and an expanse of shallow blue water. "We have excellent conditions right here in front of the shop. Let's take a look."

We walked out onto the large wooden deck where some brightly clad snorkelers were just climbing out of the water. "You won't believe what we just saw," they said, nearly in unison. "Francey found a frogfish, right here near the dock!" Susan introduced me to Francine Fieweger, Bon Bini's principal instructor.



Neil Stern, Betty and John Cummings and Donna Bobak embark on an adventure right off the Bon Bini Divers seawall.

Francey, still dripping with water and semi-contained excitement, told me, "We often have schools of baitfish and snappers, in addition to two French Angels. We commonly see groupers, filefish, flounders [and a] family of squid but to see a frogfish right here is something pretty special." After drying off, Francey and her guests, John and Eileen, sat down at the dockside table to review some fish books.

Education has become an important component of snorkeling, especially on Bonaire. Bon Bini both recognizes and values this with its active participation in an exciting new series combining classroom and water activities—Bonaire's Guided Snorkeling Program.

Several months ago, with sponsorship from the local government, the island's hotels and watersport operators implemented one of the most ambitious projects in the world of snorkeling. The program consists of 12 entertaining mini slide lectures, each lasting about one-half hour—in this case given in the cozy comfortable classroom at Bon Bini Divers. The topics deal with the most interesting and observable aspects of marine biology as they relate to snorkelers.

Francey says the shows on fish identification and overall coral reef ecology have been the most popular but the one on invertebrates gets a lot of interest as well. "We usually give these shows before the snorkelers go out but sometimes they get so interested when they're in the water that we go right into another when we get back to the shop—we're flexible."

Francey continued, "For example, last Friday we had a group of scuba divers that wanted to snorkel on their last day before flying back home. We gave them the slide show about the mangrove eco-system and then took them to Lac Bay....The mangroves there are full of upside down jellyfish and countless juvenile fish....After an hour and a half, the hardest part was getting this group to come out of the water....They were sorry they hadn't done this earlier in the week."

Bon Bini Divers' staff members pride themselves on giving personalized service. "We hear most often from our customers that it's our friendliness and flexibility that keep them coming back," explains Susan. More than 75 percent of Bon Bini's business is repeat clients and new business comes principally from word-of-mouth referrals.

Although Bon Bini Divers shares its location with the new Lion's Dive Resort, many of its customers come from other establishments. Susan explained that perhaps these people were looking for boat schedules and staff services that could meet their timetables.

In addition to Francey, all other members of the Bon Bini staff are certified divemasters or instructors. They are experienced U/W guides who take both pride and pleasure in leading snorkeling outings. Bon Bini has two boats that take snorkelers to the neighboring island of Klein Bonaire and the numerous sites off the main island. Both boats are equipped with aluminum water-level swim platforms and sturdy ladders in the stern to facilitate entries and exits. Susan adds, "Although our boats can handle 20 snorkelers at a time, we have a minimum of only three. This pretty much assures that if someone wants to go out with us, we give them the opportunity. We actually appreciate the smaller groups the most, since we are able to provide them with the most personal attention."

If you are planning a snorkeling trip to Bonaire and looking for a watersport operator that values a friendly, flexible, service-oriented approach, call Bon Bini Divers and ask for Susan or Francey. You can contact them directly at (011) 5997-5425, fax (011) 5997-4425 or e-mail Bonbinidiv@aol.com.

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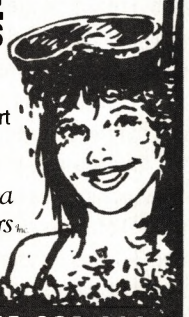
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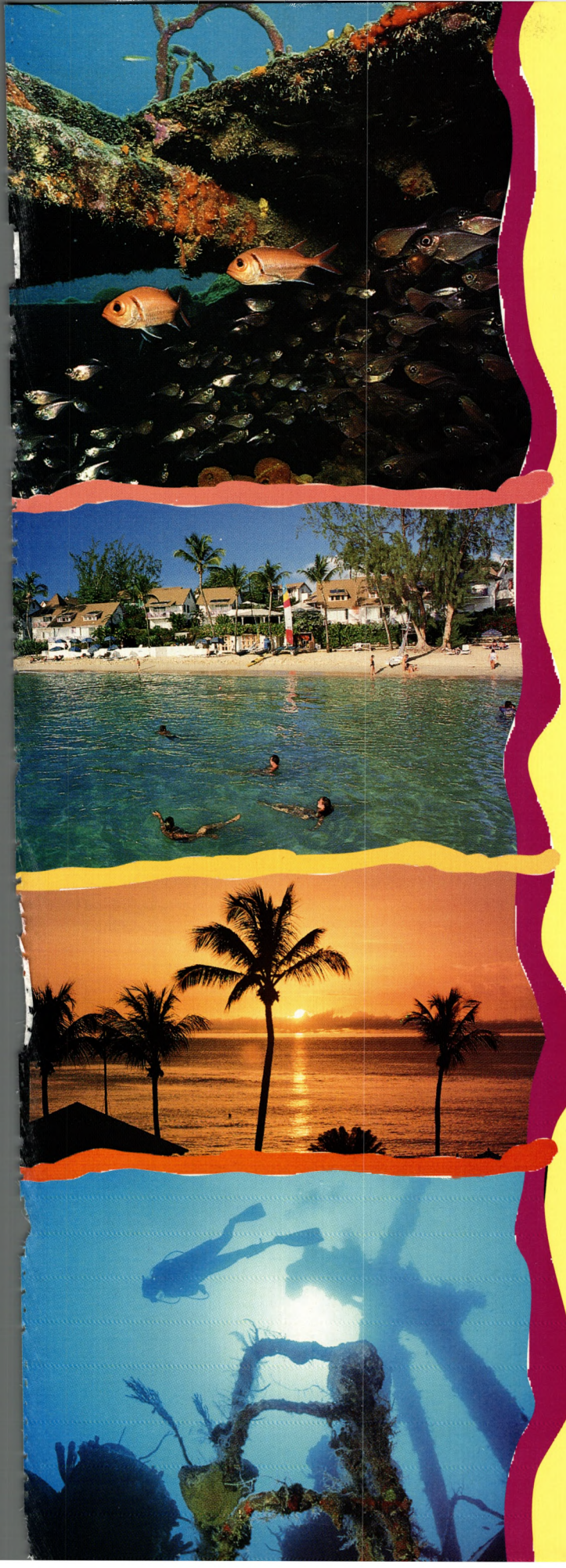
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Why I want to go to Barbados on my next dive vacation

BARBADOS

JUST BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION

1. I like shipwrecks and I know they have lots of them there.

2. The sun is always shining.

3. I can spend lots of time with my sweetheart.

4. I won't have to wake up early unless I want to.

5. Someone else will drive me around.



Why I Want to Go to Barbados!

Barbados is the perfect place to get shipwrecked! We have old wrecks and new wrecks; shallow wrecks and deep wrecks. We even have a trio of wrecks you can see on one dive! Barbados has much, much more than just great shipwrecks, though. We also have magnificent coral reefs and long, white beaches. We have shimmering golden sunsets that can ignite romance in a heartbeat and we have sizzling nightlife that will inspire your dancing feet. In fact, whatever you want on your next vacation, you will probably find it in Barbados.

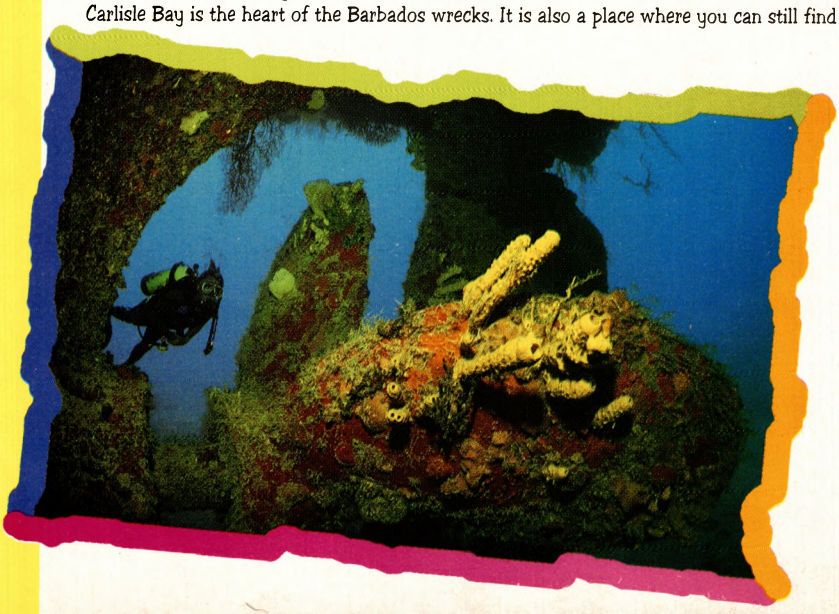
Our island is made of coral and surrounded by superb diving.



The south and west coasts, which are sheltered from the trade winds, have ideal diving conditions year-round. The water is calm and the average temperature is a balmy 80°F. At times the visibility can be astounding and it normally ranges from 60 to 125 feet. A ridge of coral parallels the coast for miles, just a short way offshore, providing so many convenient dive sites that most of the boat rides are less than ten minutes long. We hope you won't be too disappointed! Up north, the sprawling mounds of Maycocks Reef provide endless coral vistas to explore. Farther south, the sponges on Bright Ledge and Spawnee are a kaleidoscope of astounding color. You can see lime green tubes tangled with red fingers, all packed in next to orange elephant ears. Along the south coast there are many shallow reefs and walls that slope steeply from 40 feet to more than 100. There is such a variety of life on reefs such as Castle Bank, Caribbee and Pieces of Eight that you will never be bored! The east coast is our adventure diving territory, where you have to catch the right weather, but the big fish and virgin reefs make the wait worthwhile.

Barbados may be the friendliest island in the Caribbean. Even underwater many of our friendly inhabitants are waiting to make your acquaintance. Hawksbill turtles often follow you around the reef and flying gurnards display their wing-like pectoral fins in the shallows. Silver schools of horse-eye jacks circle around you and curious groupers try to peer casually over your shoulder. Seahorses will tuck their long snouts shyly, right in front of your mask, while frogfish will remain motionless, confident in their camouflage.

Carlisle Bay is the heart of the Barbados wrecks. It is also a place where you can still find old

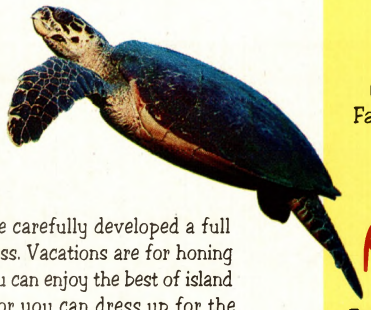


bottles and buckles from ships that anchored here centuries ago. See if you can find your own piece of history! Want to see a ghostly apparition underwater? Try diving the *Eillion*, a smuggler's ship that sank in 1996. Or, how about an historic wreck shallow enough to snorkel? That would be the *Berwind*, a French tugboat sunk in 1919 and now covered with the most amazing corals and sponges. Nearby, the *Ce-Trek*, a boat of concrete construction now coated with coral, completes this unique trio. If you make every dive of your vacation on the *Stavronikita*, you still won't see it all. Sunk in 1978, the *Stavro* is the queen of Barbados wrecks, an underwater monument literally packed with life. From the enormous propeller at 130 feet to the top of the foremast at 20 feet, the *Stavro* is encrusted with seafans, corkscrews of wire coral, bushy colonies of delicate black coral, round heads of brain coral and more colorful sponges than you can imagine. Swarming around this prodigious growth like bees to honey are countless reef fish. Every link in the food chain is here, from predatory barracuda to tiny silverside minnows. More wrecks await just north of Carlisle Bay, including the freighters *Pamir*, *Lord Combermere* and *Friars Craig*. All of them are relatively shallow wrecks, so you can have plenty of bottom time, but each has its own personality.



We know a vacation is not complete without lots of fun and sun, too, especially if diving is not first on everyone's agenda. Barbados gets more than 3,000 hours of soul-warming sun each year, so there will be plenty available when you get here. Of course, you'll also need a nice sandy beach from which to catch those rays. Naturally, we have miles of that waiting for you as well. And, wouldn't it be nice to have a first class hotel overlooking the beach with knockout views from a private balcony attached to your room? Take your choice from more than 140 accommodations! Without jamming the coastline with high rise buildings, we have carefully developed a full range of hotels, from simple quality to exclusive plushness. Vacations are for honing your sense of adventure, even at the table. In Barbados you can enjoy the best of island cuisine without even brushing the sand off your feet or you can dress up for the gourmet experience of a lifetime. The choices seem to go on forever.





Nondivers and not-quite-so-enthusiastic divers will be overjoyed to discover Barbados above the water. Visit one of our grand and historic sugar plantations or rent a car and explore the spectacular scenery of our wild east coast. Grab your racket for a spirited game of tennis or unwind with a round of golf. Whatever you can imagine doing on a Caribbean island, we have the very best of it in Barbados. Join us for an experience you won't forget. A vacation in Barbados will leave you, as the saying goes, "sweet fuh days!"

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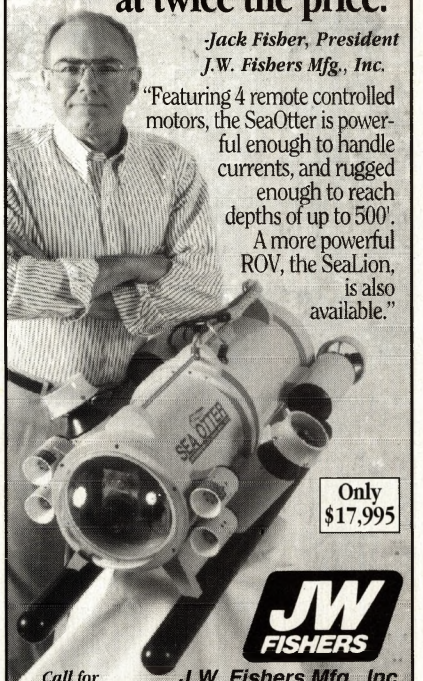
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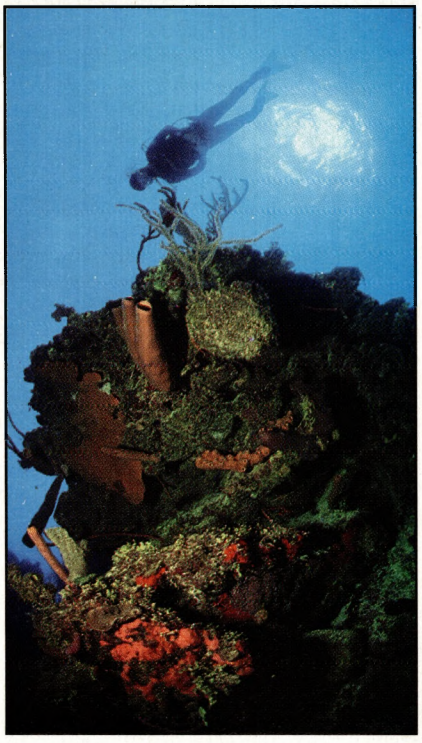
Belize's Manta Resort

A Tropical Shangri-La on Glover's Reef



TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK FREHSEE

Top: Private wooden cottages are nestled among the palm trees. Above: Guests board Manta's 26 foot dive boats. Below: A coral pinnacle at Hole in the Wall.

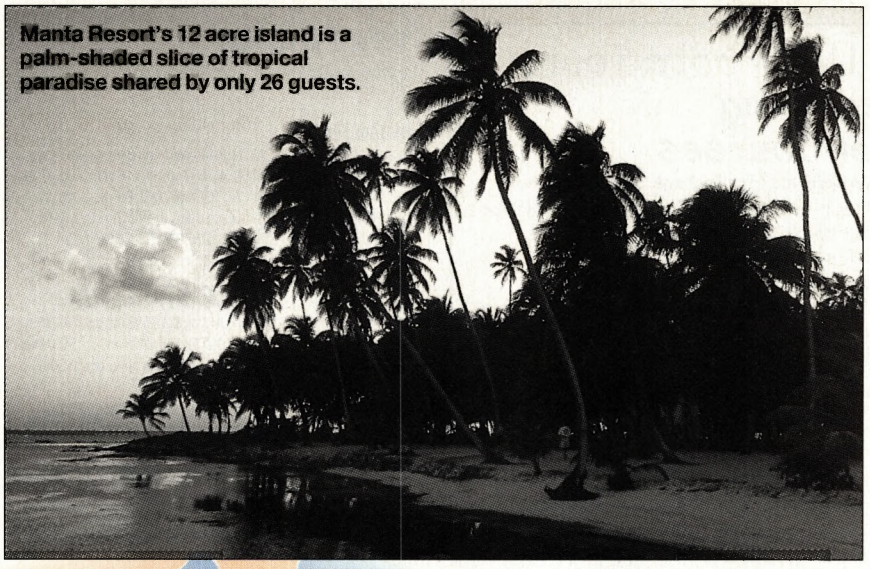


Most North Americans dream of an escape to a tropical isle. Visions of tall swaying palms, white sand beaches and the caress of a warm sun are universal, while golden reefs and clear turquoise seas are an important and necessary addition for those who are scuba divers. Some time ago, I stumbled upon just such a place, quick and comparatively easy to reach from the U.S. In the process, I was also introduced to one of the most charming and special dive resorts in the entire Caribbean—the lovely Manta Resort on nearly deserted, mostly wilderness Glover's Reef Atoll offshore Belize.

Belize has three special atolls, all on the ocean side of the famous Belize Barrier Reef (also known as the Great Western Caribbean Reef or Great Maya Reef). Glover's Reef is the farthest from Belize City and, therefore, the least visited. In fact, there is a 57 mile ocean crossing from Belize City to the resort. However, the 48 foot *Pelagic*, the handsome, stable and comfortable transfer vessel, got us there in about two and a half hours (with a little help from the soda and beer cooler). Once behind the encircling reef, however, the view simply takes your breath away. You ask yourself, can this place be real? The vision is indeed real, yet quite unbelievable. There are two low lying, sandy, palm-crowded islets facing each other, with a gentle, transparent lagoon in between. On the main island there is a dock and a pier with a palm thatched pagoda extending into the lagoon. Within the coconut forest and strung along the white sand beach is a string of stilt-mounted bungalows. This is a place where you can lose your heart and find your soul.

Evidently, the three or four couples already at the resort felt this same sense of having found a special resort. "Oh, you're a journalist," they replied with some mild disappointment. "We suppose you're going to tell everyone about this place."

There should be no fear of crowds now or in the near future at Manta—it is still off the beaten path. Besides, there are only guestrooms enough for little more than two dozen visitors and those are spread over the 12 acre island. The atoll, nearly deserted except for Manta Resort, is 18 miles long and 12 to 15 miles wide. The area within the oval of reefs and one-half dozen islets is 81 square miles. Glover's Reef is about the size of Bonaire and features diving in all quadrants. There's enough diving to last a lifetime and only one resort.



Manta Resort's 12 acre island is a palm-shaded slice of tropical paradise shared by only 26 guests.



Above: A sumptuous dinner is served at the Manta Lagoon Restaurant and Driftwood Bar—the resort's thatched social center at the end of a wooden dock in the middle of a placid lagoon (below).







Above: The *Pelagic* transfers guests from Belize City to Manta Resort. Below: TACA's 767 and 737 jets fly non-stop to Belize daily from Miami, New Orleans and Houston, with immediate connections from Los Angeles and San Francisco.



There is one nod to civilization: a two family rotunda shaped guesthouse complete with air-conditioning, TV/stereo, kitchen, etc., very handsomely furnished at the northern end of the caye. The rest of the guest accommodations are simpler and very similar. There are 11 beachside mahogany bungalows nestled in palms. The bungalows have either double or single beds. Every guesthouse has a bath, shower and porch. Just south of the bungalows, at the end of the long dock jutting into the lagoon, is the resort's signature—the thatched roof Manta Lagoon Restaurant and Driftwood Bar. The food at the resort is outstanding. There is a daily choice of dinner entrees. Breakfast and lunch are served buffetstyle, with a choice of eggs, etc., cooked to order. Those who wish to stay and party late at the bar may do so. Most steal away early to their little island cottages or spend some time star gazing on the south beach.

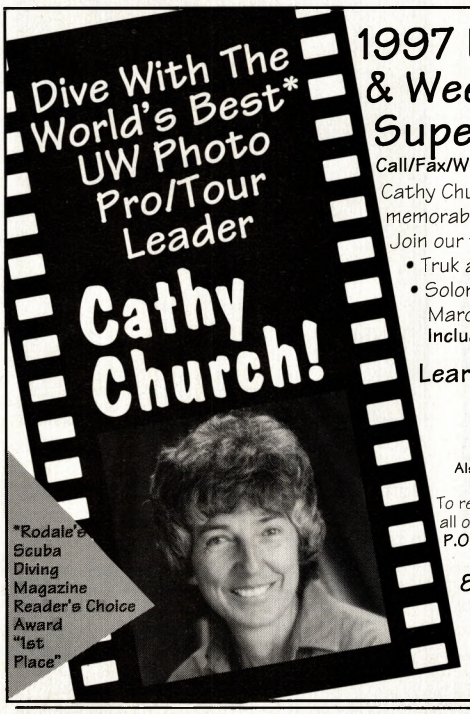
The diving operation is small but full service. Instruction, fundamental rentals and some accessories are available. Several 26 to 32 foot twin outboard boats, each with a skipper and a divemaster, provide morning and afternoon reef trips. Boat night diving is available one or two nights per week. Snorkeling or diving in the lagoon—a very special place—is always available. In only two to eight feet of water, visitors will find schools of Bonefish, Yellowtail Snappers, Nurse Sharks, Stingrays and even Spotted Eagle Rays.

With such a vast territory to cover, the concentration of familiar and established dive sites is toward the southern end of the atoll near the resort. Sites 3 to 25 minutes from the dock include the southern, southwestern and southeastern quadrants. There is considerable diversity without traveling long or far from the resort. Each quadrant presents a noticeably different reef profile and a leeside. Reef sites include shallow sea gardens such as **Elkhorn Crossing**; mid-depth sites such as **Pinnacles**; and sites along the nearly continuous outer wall such as **Gorgonia's Gallery**. There are 27 named dive sites in all; as yet, no sites are moored, a drift diving procedure is used with no anchoring. A common element is the plentiful marine life, including huge Barracuda and sleeping Nurse Sharks. Visibility averages 100 feet.

My favorite dive site is an extended drift dive over a continuous succession of giant coral spurs known collectively as **Hole in the Wall**. Shore diving and snorkeling are available at the southwest end of the island and encompasses patch reefs to a maximum depth of 30 feet. Fishing (all types), canoeing, swimming, snorkeling, reading and island exploring are always available as alternate experiences.

The standard Manta Resort package is a Saturday to Saturday stay. It includes transfers from airport to dock, dock to resort, accommodations, full meal plan and three dives per day. One week at Manta Resort, above and below the sea, is an unforgettable tropical holiday.

For more information on and/or reservations for Manta Resort call (800) 326-1724, (310) 937-6468 or fax (310) 937-6473.



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Dive Notes

THE AGGRESSOR FLEET OFFERS REBREATHERS: Training in the use of Uwatec Atlantis 1 rebreathers is now offered on Aggressor Fleet vessels. Rental units are also available.

Aggressor Fleet dive instructors are certified Technical Diving International (TDI) nitrox and rebreather instructors. Guests may rent the rebreathers after completing the course or by showing proof of certification.

Rebreathers provide many advantages over conventional scuba: the inhalation gas has a higher moisture content; there are fewer bubbles so photographers can sneak up on shy ocean creatures; and bottom time is extended.

For the availability of Uwatec Atlantis 1 rebreathers onboard Aggressor liveaboards, call Aggressor Fleet Limited at (800) 348-2628.

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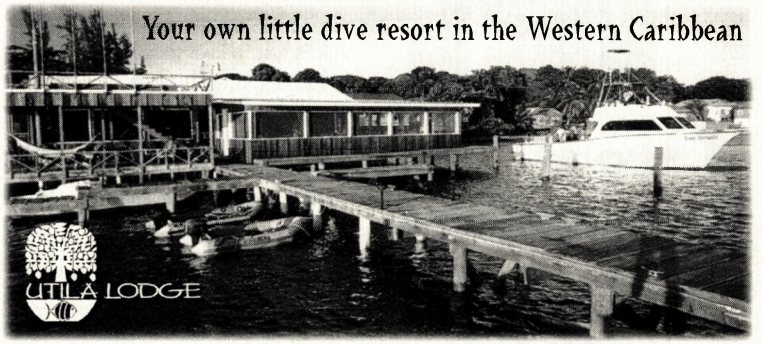
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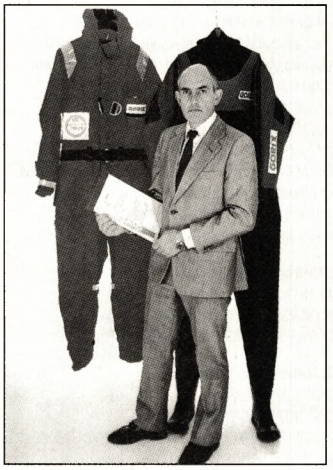
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Dive Notes

NEW TEMPERATURE REGULATING TEXTILE: A new material, capable of regulating its own temperature without the need of a thermostat, has been developed by a British company. Gorix is an electro-conductive textile that is so versatile and flexible its potential uses seem limitless. With the aid of simple



circuitry, a heating element made from the fabric can maintain a steady temperature and control variations to within 0.2°C of the limit. Depending on the control circuity chosen for the end product, the limit can be set or variable.

Already successfully tailored for diving suits, car seats, horse blankets and survival suits, the textile has been nicknamed the Wonder Fabric say the developers, Gorix, Ltd. Numerous industry sectors, including aerospace, composite technology and physiotherapy are showing an interest in its possibilities.

To generate heat and maintain its constant temperature, the Gorix control circuitry, attached to the heater pad, senses the change in ohmic resistance. The material functions well on low voltages; typically 12 to 24 volts can produce high heat output. In the case of the heated dive suit, a diver wishing to maintain a suit temperature of 38°C, would only need eight rechargeable 1.2 volt nickel-cadmium batteries, carried in a specifically designed weightbelt.

The possibilities for Gorix appear so great the British company is seeking licensees and manufacturers to put forward applications for use of the material and control system in their own products. Inquiries should be directed to Robert Rix, Gorix, Ltd., 14 Dovedale Road, Rotherham, Yorkshire, England, S65 3AJ; (011) 44-1709-370529.

SHARK MARINE U/W VIDEO CAMERAS: Shark Marine introduces two miniature underwater video cameras: the low light SV-14 black and white camera and the SV-17R high resolution color camera. Extremely small and versatile, the SV-14 has a two inch diameter and is 2.5 inches



long. The SV-17R is 2.5 inches in diameter by 3.625 inches long. The video resolution is 380 lines and 450 lines respectively. These tiny cameras have been tested extensively. They are being used around the world for a multitude of applications—commercial, search and recovery, research, inspection and security. This reliable tool has been praised by its users for being dependable and always supplying high quality imaging.

The cameras can be mounted permanently for monitoring or mounted on a 24 foot extension pole.

For more information, call (905) 687-6672, fax (905) 687-9742 or e-mail shark@freenet.npiec.on.ca.

SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA, BEACHES GET EXCELLENT WATER QUALITY MARKS: In Heal the Bay's August 1996 Beach Pollution Report Card, the beaches of Santa Monica received excellent water quality marks. The recently revitalized Santa Monica Pier received an A plus, owing in part to the recent construction of a dry-weather runoff diversion. Such diversions are an effective means of protecting the public health.

During August, Southern California's fourth consecutive month without rain, only 8 of 62 beaches posed a significant health risk to swimmers.

The report, compiled from water quality measurements taken during August 1996, graded 62 beaches on a scale from A through F based on the risk of swimmers becoming ill.

Heal the Bay is a Southern California nonprofit environmental organization working through a variety of research, education, public outreach and advocacy programs to make Santa Monica Bay and Southern California's beaches safe and healthy for people and marine life. The organization's 10,000 members live throughout the southland.

If you would like a copy of the Santa Monica Bay map with some of the Beach Pollution Report Card grades printed on it, please call (310) 581-4188, extension 123, to have the map faxed to you.

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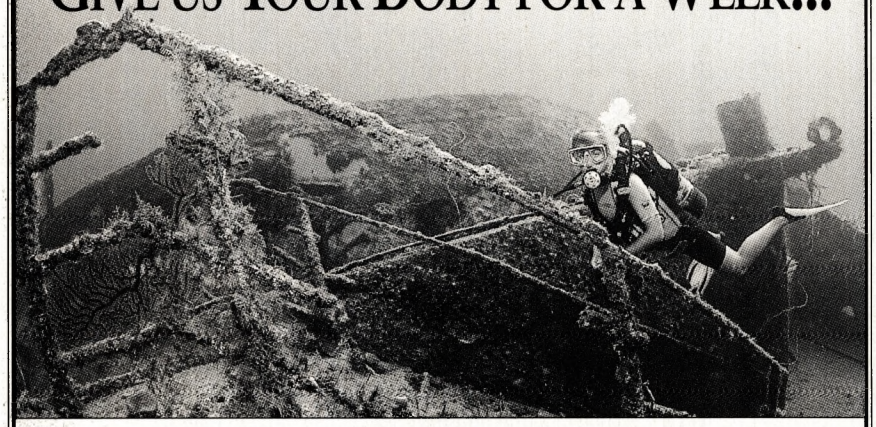
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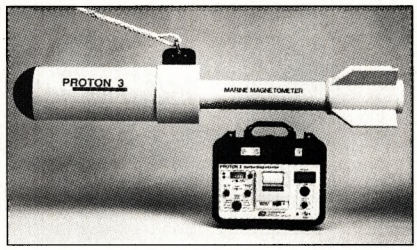
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FISHERS' PROTON 3 MAGNETOMETER: J.W. Fishers, longtime manufacturer of underwater video and search equipment, has announced a 1,000 foot depth rated version of the very popular Proton 3 magnetometer. The Proton 3 is Fishers' top of the line boat-towed metal detec-



tion system. The magnetometer is a highly sensitive metal detector that can locate iron and steel targets such as shipwrecks, downed aircraft, cannons, anchors, pipelines, etc. The Proton 3's detection range extends more than 1,500 feet (for large targets) on each side of the towfish, giving a detection area of more than one-half mile.

The new 1,000 foot version has a towfish constructed of rugged materials to withstand the increased pressure of deeper depths. The main fish body is constructed of very heavy duty, corrosion proof PVC. The 1,000 foot version includes 1,000 feet of cable and is priced at only $14,595. Shallower depth rated versions are also available from $8,295.

Options for the Proton 3 include GPS/Loran interface, built-in printer, RS232 output interface and a software package. The software allows the magnetometer's readout date to be output to a computer for viewing, printing or storage.

For more information on the Proton 3 or any of Fishers' other products, contact Christopher Combs at J.W. Fishers Mfg., Inc., 1953 County Street, E. Taunton, MA 02718 or call (800) 822-4744, (508) 822-7330; fax (508) 880-8949.

***TIATA* IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA:** See & Sea Travel of San Francisco has a full schedule of 1997 cruises aboard the fabulous *Tiata* in Northern Papua New Guinea.

Carl Roessler, president of See & Sea, will personally escort a *Tiata* cruise October 10 to 20, 1997.

Tiata's spring cruises are in Milne Bay, where rare marine species are regularly encountered. In the late summer, *Tiata* cruises north to Kavieng for a series of cruises from August to December.

Northern New Guinea is famous for big animal diving with Silvertip Sharks, big tuna and vast schools of jacks and Barracuda.

For further information, contact See & Sea Travel, Inc., 50 Francisco Street #205, San Francisco, CA 94133 or call (415) 434-3400, fax (415) 434-3409, e-mail divxprt@ix.netcom.com or visit on the Internet at http://www.divxprt.com.

JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU'S SNORKELING PROGRAM: Jean-Michel Cousteau has teamed up with The Out Islands of The Bahamas, American Airlines/American Eagle and U.S. Divers to create a snorkeling program with 24 resorts on nine islands and emphasizing marine environment education and conservation.

Christened Jean-Michel Cousteau's Out Islands Snorkeling Adventures, the program introduces visitors to the thousands of colorful reefs full of abundant marine life that make the Out Islands their home. Cousteau's vision is to educate the visitor about the importance of protecting the life of the coral reef.

The program includes snorkeling instruction by trained professionals, three guided excursions, waterproof I.D. charts and reference books, T-shirt and use of limited edition snorkeling gear. Participants will also receive a set of snorkeling gear (mask, fins, snorkel and gear bag) delivered to their home after their trip.

For additional information, contact The Bahamas Out Island Promotion Board at (800) 688-4752; in Miami call (305) 359-8099.

AMERICAN CANADIAN UNDERWATER CERTIFICATIONS: Established in Canada in 1964, the American Canadian Underwater Certifications (ACUC) is now offering instructor training and insurance in the U.S. Walt "Butch" Hendrick and Andrea Zaferes of Lifeguard Systems have been appointed the ACUC U.S. representatives and will be in the ACUC booth at DEMA.

ACUC wants to maintain the highest standards of education in the recreational diving industry. Lifeguard Systems is in the process of updating and adding to the ACUC standards, policies and materials to meet the needs of American diving educators and divers alike. They would love to have your comments and wish lists of what you would like to see in a certifying agency, whether you are an entry level diver, a public safety rescuer or a course director. For an information package or to send your wish list, contact Lifeguard Systems, P.O. Box 548, Hurley, NY 12443; (914) 331-3383.

FREE BONAIRE SNORKELING GUIDE: A free eight page snorkel guide is available by calling the Tourism Corporation Bonaire. The user-friendly snorkel guide provides important information on snorkeling in general, Bonaire's reef and what snorkelers can expect from Bonaire Guided Snorkeling.

For more information on Bonaire or to get a copy of Bonaire Guided Snorkeling, contact the Tourism Corporation Bonaire at (800) U-BONAIR (826-6247) or visit on the Internet at http://www.interknowlege.com/.

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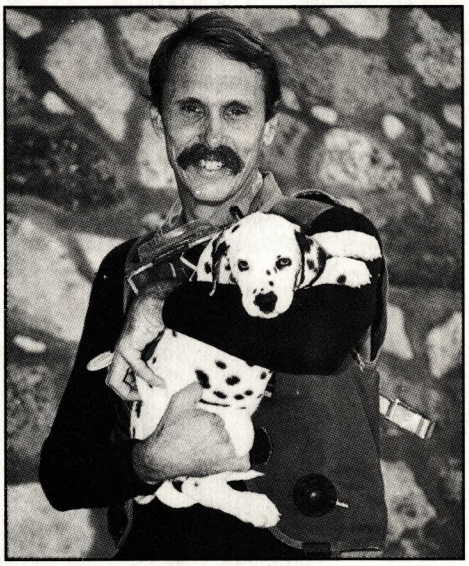
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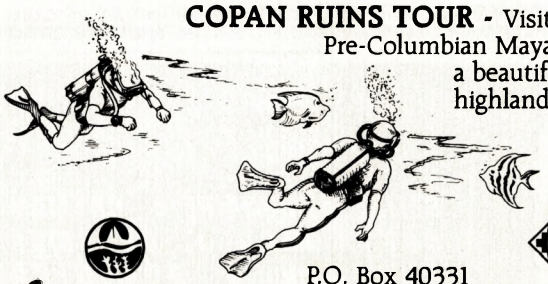
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MODE INDUSTRIES MAXX STEALTH S/DPV: Mode Industries has developed its underwater propulsion vehicle, the Maxx Stealth S/DPV during the last six years. It is the only DPV to use a unique, copyrighted, custom solid-state electronics package protected by surge suppressors. The S/DPV electronics package is also unique because it is easy to replace in the unlikely case that it fails.



The Maxx Stealth S/DPV has been tested to depths of 325 feet. It has only two holes where water can intrude and the electronics are sealed in two layers of waterproofing; in the unlikely event the interior floods, the motor still runs.

The Maxx features a LED battery status indicator. Also included is a detachable, dual-purpose T-bar saddle for effortless flying through the water.

For portability on land, one popular option for the Maxx S/DPV is a small set of rugged wheels that fit on the bottom of the unit.

For information or purchase, contact Mort Lashman, president Mode Industries, 1701 West Broward Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312; phone (800) 226-0767, (954) 832-9900 or fax (954) 462-2157. Visit on the Internet at http://www.opendoor.com/webfooted/maxxstealth.

NEW WORLD CLASS CATAMARAN: Morrelli and Melvin, well respected designers of multi-hull watercraft, have created and launched the 35 foot PowerCat. Built by Shaw Boats in Aberdeen, Washington, the PowerCat 35 is powered by twin Yanmar 315 hp diesels running twin Hamilton 273 jet propulsion systems. The craft averages 20 knots cruising, with a top speed of 30 knots.

The new craft also offers 30 to 40 percent more interior deck space than a monohull of the same length, boasting such amenities as two queen sized berths in forward cabins and ample ventilation.

Another notable feature is the flybridge. All steering is done by joystick and the flybridge helm is a wraparound area that surrounds the captain.

The eight foot cockpit and downriggers make the PowerCat 35 ideal for offshore fishing; the transom door and swimsteps offer easy access for play in the water. Like all multi-hull designs, the



PowerCat 35 is smooth riding and stable.

For more information, contact Morrelli & Melvin Design & Engineering, 177 Riverside Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92663. The phone number is (714) 731-6399 or they can be reached by e-mail at 75144,3402@compuserve.com.

MARINE RESERVE OPENS IN BELIZE: A two year project involving UK-based Coral Cay Conservation (CCC) has ended with the official opening of the Bacalar Chico National Park and Marine Reserve in Belize.

The Boca Bacalar Reef, which supports a high diversity of marine species and is thought to be the only barrier reef in the world that meets the land, has now been recommended as a World Heritage Site. Because of its proximity to the Mexican border, environmentalists hope it will soon become the world's first ever transboundary reserve.

The reserve was officially opened August 23 by the Belize Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Private Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, and Janet Gibson, one of the Trustees of the Coral Cay Conservation Trust.

For further information, contact Jonathon Ridley or Al Ilarborne at Coral Cay Conservation, Ltd., at 44 (0) 171 498 6248, fax 44 (0) 171 498 8447.

MARES' NEW CYBER SNORKELS: The Cyberdry offers an ergonomic design, dry cap and easy clearing through a bottom drain valve and patented BPS system. The Cyberpro has the same features as the Cyberdry but with a premolded, contoured barrel. The Cyberflex features a special height-adjustable connection and an adjustable mouthpiece. Clearing is easier with the unique bottom profile. Finally, the Cyber, which has the same features as the Cyberflex, is for divers who prefer a semi-flexible snorkel.

For more information or the Mares dealer nearest you, contact Mares America Corporation, Shore Point, 1 Selleck Street, Norwalk, Connecticut 06855; (203) 855-0631, fax (203) 866-9573.



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PALAU PACIFIC RESORT: The Palau Pacific Resort (PPR) is operating as normal following the collapse of the Koror-Babeldaob bridge. While this is a tragedy for the nation as a whole, guests have not experienced any inconveniences at PPR owing to the collapsed bridge.

Daily flights to and from Palau are operating on their normal schedule. Guests are transported between Koror and the airport at Babeldaob via boat. Prior to the bridge's completion in 1977, this was the standard mode of transportation between Palau's main islands.



The primary tourist attractions, scuba diving and rock island tours, have continued to be served by the local companies on their regular schedules without delays.

PPR, which operates its own water and electric facilities, continues to provide first class service. Both of PPR's fine restaurants are open and serving their regular array of freshly prepared foods.

MARSHALL ISLANDS DIVE AND FISHING PACKAGES: The 150 room Outrigger Marshall Islands Resort now has diving and fishing packages. The new resort on the island of Majuro, in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, opened July 31. It is offering three night packages with scuba diving or sportfishing included.

The diving package includes a three night stay, roundtrip airport transfers and two single tank dives.

The Outrigger Marshall Islands Resort offers a fitness center, swimming pool, tennis court, sundry shop, a 120 seat restaurant, cocktail lounge and meeting room.

For reservations or information about Outrigger's diving or fishing packages, call Outrigger Hotels and Resorts at (800) OUTRIGGER (688-7444) within the U.S. or Canada.

For more extensive diving or fishing packages to the Marshalls, contact Central Pacific Dive Expeditions at (800) 846-3483 or Trip-n-Tour at (800) 348-0842.

BILIKIKI CRUISES ANNOUNCES SPECIAL DIVE TRIPS: Bilikiki Cruises, Ltd., has a series of special charters at special prices during January, February and March, 1997 on *Spirit of the Solomons*.

"For years we've been telling divers that the Solomon Islands have great diving all year-round but many people seem

unwilling to believe us. Now we're going to make it easy for divers to find out," said Rick Belmare, managing director of Bilikiki Cruises, Ltd.

The rate for the special charters is actually the rate for twin-share cabins with shared facilities but all cabins are being made available at one low price on a first come, first served basis. This means that on the special cruises most passengers will be in cabins with full facilities for the price of shared facilities.

To take advantage of this great offer, contact Allan Millham at Bilikiki Cruises, Ltd., (800) 663-5363, by fax at (604) 383-6598 or e-mail to bilikiki@horizon.bc.ca.

Air New Zealand and Solomon Airlines offer special excursion rates to the Solomons from Los Angeles via Nadi, Fiji, or Auckland, New Zealand.

For air fares, schedules and reservations, call Air New Zealand at (800) 262-1234.

CAYMAN BRAC'S RUSSIAN SHIPWRECK: The MV *Captain Keith Tibbetts* is resting comfortably on the ocean floor off Cayman Brac. Inspections have been com-

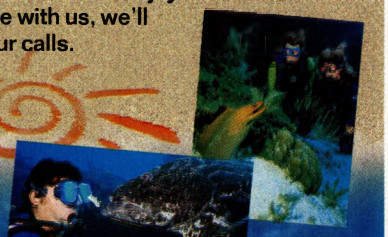


pleted; the Russian warship has been deemed safe and is now open to the public for diving. Ben Parry, president of the Sister Islands Tourism Association, has reported that because of the pristine, clear waters of Cayman Brac, the wreck can be snorkeled as well as dived. Barracuda, groupers, Sergeant Majors and two French Angelfish—there when the initial site assessment was done—have recently been seen frequenting the ship.

NIKONOS 1997 U/W PHOTO EVENTS: Nikon has announced the dates for its popular Nikonos Shootouts and the brand new Fish I.D. Challenge. In 1997 there will be four Shootouts: The Bonaire Shootout, June 21 through 28; the Cayman Brac Shootout, July 12 through 19; the Key Largo Shootout, August 9 through 17; and the Monterey Shootout, October 16 through 19. The Nikonos Fish I.D. Challenge is scheduled for April 12 through 19 on Grand Cayman. A total of nearly 1,000 participants are expected to attend the five events. For information or reservations, call WaterHouse Photo Tours at (800) 272-9122, (305) 451-2228 or fax (305) 451-5147.

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An aerial view of Posada Del Sol shows the deep green foliage, the stark white of the beach and the deep blue of the life rich waters.

Posada Del Sol

Guanaja's First Class Dedicated Dive Resort

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK FREHSEE

Red tile and Spanish arches immersed in green surrounded by a turquoise sea—your personal discovery of Posada Del Sol (Inn of the Sun) and the island of Guanaja will be both a visual delight and a spiritual renaissance. Nobody likes surprises on a dive vacation unless, of course, they are good ones. Fortunately, there are plenty of good surprises here.

Where are we going, you wonder as your twin engine aircraft settles on the island airstrip, nearly encircled by jungle. Minutes later you are in a water taxi, the island's only mode of transportation, on your way to the resort. The panorama is sea and sky and the pinetipped peaks of lovely, verdant Guanaja. The view of the island has surely changed little since the arrival of Columbus on his fourth and final voyage to the New World in 1502. On the way you pass a village on stilts—a manmade island known as Bonacca, Guanaja's capital.

Then it appears, one little revelation after the other. First the boathouse, docks and private beaches. Then the tennis courts, mainhouse and guesthouses, all nearly hidden in colorful fruit and flower trees.

The resort's exterior and landscaping is impeccable; the entrance to the main-





Left: The sparkling shallows of the south barrier reef. This photo: The mainhouse is nestled in dense greenery.





Above: The pool deck provides a relaxing alternative to the beach. Left: *Spanish Diver*, one of Posada's fleet of medium sized dive boats.

house via a circular stone walkway, unforgettable. Posada Del Sol is a mansion that would not be out of place in Beverly Hills. Upstairs there is a sprawling wooden deck, dappled with palms, deck furniture and hammocks, all surrounding a crystal freshwater pool. A handsome indoor/outdoor bar joins the exterior to the mainhouse, which includes the beautiful restaurant within its cathedral ceiling.

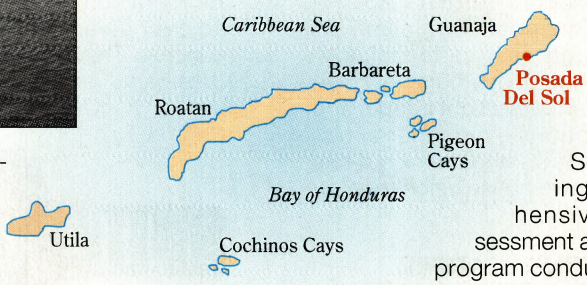
There are only 23 guestrooms arranged in four separate wings—one poolside, one oceanside and two hillside. Each room is beautifully furnished in tropical villa decor of wood, tile and marble. Within the resort you are only steps away from the private beach and a coconut palm lined stone path wanders past gardens, tennis courts and barbecue/bar area to the boathouse and dive shop. In addition to boats, gear rental and storage, there is also a full service photo/video shop and a complete workout center.

Morning and evening meals are served in the dining room; lunch is usually served on the pool deck beneath the shade of umbrellas and flowering trees. The meals are always a combination of fresh fruit, vegetables and seafood, wonderfully prepared as island, Central American or popular continental cuisine. Snacks, happy hour tropical drinks and complimentary room service coffee are daily offerings. Calories from sumptuous desserts or wine, champagne or after dinner liqueurs can be lost along the aerobic hiking trail that climbs the 1,000 foot hill behind the resort.

Posada Del Sol features a fleet of mid-sized custom dive boats. Each is about 42 feet in length, with a sunroof, platform, ladders, storage and spacious deck. Drinking water, freshwater dip tanks and full safety and communications equipment are included. There are usually no more than 10 divers aboard each vessel. The dive schedule normally includes a two tank morning dive and a single tank afternoon dive, with one boat night dive and an all day picnic dive scheduled each week. There are a series of interesting shore dives planned along a transect line beginning at the dive dock linking coral heads and several small shipwrecks.

Posada Del Sol offers an extensive and varied array of fringing reef dive sites. The resort is on the southern coast of Guanaja but the size of the island (7 by 12 miles) and a bisecting canal provide easy access to the northern coast. The south coast fringing reef is broken and irregular, often linked by a series of flat, coconut-crowded islets. The northern coast reefs are a continuous barrier reef system well offshore. In all, there are more than 40 moored dive sites regularly visited. These include such diverse experiences as the spectacular wreck of the ***Jado Trader***, the rolling coral landscape at **Vertigo**, the tunnel at **Jim's Silverlode**, the lava lined canyons of **Black Rock** and the sheer wall and reef pinnacles at the **Bayman Drop**. Periodically, Posada Del Sol launches an all day trip to the wilderness reefs of Barbareta Island 12 to 15 miles away.

Posada Del Sol caters to divers and island adventurers of all experience levels. The activities and surroundings are especially suited to those who are well traveled and seek amenities and experiences a cut above the norm. An ongoing theme at the resort has been its affinity with professional diving and an interest in the marine sciences. Several research organizations and universities have been invited and supported by the resorts, with interests ranging from coral studies to grouper spawnings. Currently, Posada Del Sol is supporting a comprehensive coral assessment and evaluation program conducted by Texas A & M University. Research and monitoring will determine the types and varieties of corals in the Bay Islands and will eventually lead to practical recommendations on diving procedures and sustainable development. The resident marine biologists present a weekly slide program to PDS guests on marine life and coral identification.



These presentations are a part of an agenda of weekly activities designed to entertain and/or educate visitors. You can drift in or out of this schedule with as much relaxation and privacy as you please. Activities such as an aerobic hike, a beach party, an all day picnic to scenic Michael's Rock Beach, a waterfall and jungle hike and a sunset rum punch cruise are normal offerings. Visitors may also consider tacking on a day or two on the Honduras mainland to visit the Maya site of Copan or to experience whitewater rafting.

(Continued on Page 117)

Leisure Pro's Blue Reef Agressor

Your Digital Dive Buddy

BY TY SAWYER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

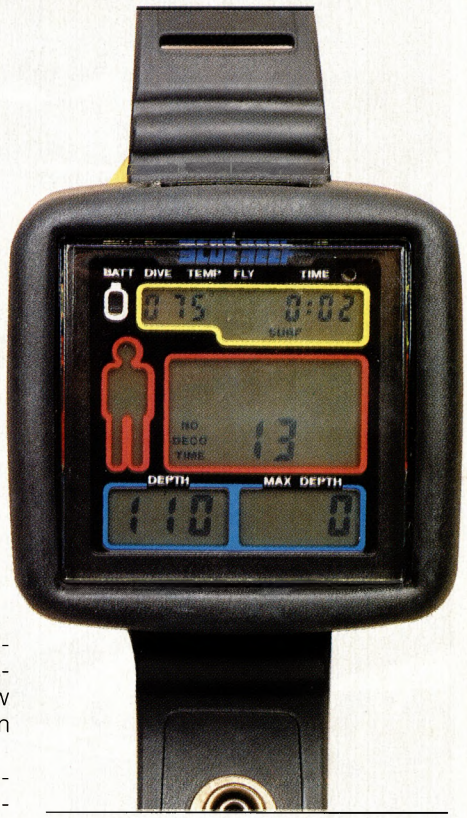
Ancient Indians of the American Southwest used petroglyphs to convey important information at a glance for passersby. Leisure Pro's Blue Reef Agressor Dive Computer has taken note of the practical aspects of at-a-glance information and utilized it for diver safety with a patented and innovative Diver Pictograph. In fact, the entire design of the Agressor reflects an astute understanding of the need for quick and easy to comprehend information. And more, the computer is made for rugged use and has a comfortable, ergonomic fit. It's a dive computer designed to perform under real life conditions with the active diver in mind. The most compelling attribute, though, is its affordability. Anyone thinking of buying a new dive computer, even with a tight budget and high expectations—beginner or advanced—might want to check out this full featured powerhouse before making any final choices.

GETTING STARTED

The computer is activated either by immersion or by touching two stainless steel contacts simultaneously. Once activated the Agressor will perform a self-diagnostic check then automatically scroll through the depth and time limits for a no decompression dive between the depths of 30 and 130 feet. Then you will notice the unique and highly efficient design of the oversized LCD. The display contains six divisions, each color coded and situated according to the importance of the information; five windows are for decompression status or dive information but the sixth is what makes the Agressor an extraordinarily user friendly and ultra safe dive computer—the Diver Pictograph. It stands like a sentinel on the left hand side of the display. The ingeniously easy to understand pictograph (in the shape of a standing human) displays the diver's theoretical nitrogen absorption level as based on the computer's decompression algorithm. The Diver Pictograph begins each dive as a blank outline and, as the dive progresses, the body fills with black horizontal bars from the feet to the head, representing the body's increasing nitrogen absorption. When the pictograph fills to the shoulders, it is probably a good idea to ascend to a shallower depth. The decompression algorithm automatically adjusts to your changing profile; as you ascend the pictograph will factor and show a new, lower level of saturation based on depth, time and normal offgasing.

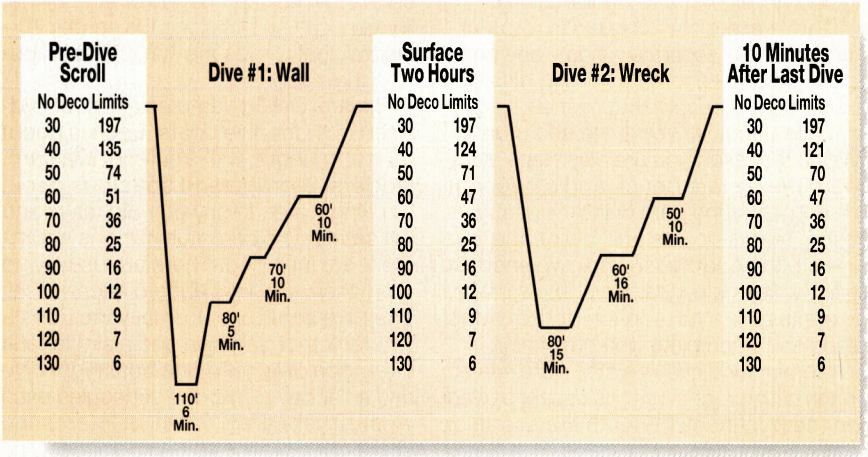
The rest of the LCD is extremely sensible and intuitive, providing pertinent information in a compartmented format spread over an area measuring 4.8 square inches. The large central window shows remaining no decompression

(Continued on Page 99)



Above: The Agressor's oversized LCD measures 4.8 square inches and is divided into color coded windows; the patented Diver Pictograph is seen on the left. Below: The multi-adjustable wrist mount.





Above: The Blue Reef Agressor factors in your dive profiles and calculates new no decompression limits. The limits shown are scrolled before diving, before dive #1 and after dive #2.

1997

Dive Guide



COSTA RICA



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Costa Rica's Abundant Marine Populations Will Astound Even the Most Experienced Divers





Harlequin Shrimp (left), Frogfish (right) & large schools of fish (below) are commonplace .

Imagine a place where the water is warm (75 to 85°F) and the schools of fish are so thick they flow like rivers in the open sea. At almost every dive site, there is a billowing cloud of 2,000 to 10,000 fish hanging above the reef. The place is Costa Rica, where the unexpected is commonplace. Hazy shadows emerge from a blizzard of fish as divers are greeted by a giant Manta Ray, an elegant Eagle Ray or perhaps a Whale Shark. Big animal encounters are frequent and often occur near shore. Nutrient rich waters are what attracts all those fish. While some dive destinations offer high visibility and few fish, in Costa Rica you will find tons of fish and visibility in the 30 to 120 foot range.

At offshore islands, divers can witness fantastic flights of 400 to 500 schooling Hammerhead Sharks, 4,000 Bat Rays, 50 to 60 black Pilot Whales or 100 *Mobula* Rays. For shark lovers, there are many spots where you can find Whitetip Reef Sharks stacked up like logs, several semi-friendly Bull Sharks, or the more aggressive Galapagos Sharks. Few places on earth can rival the biodiversity and abundance of this remarkable destination—warm water, good visibility and tons of fish!

Pacific and Caribbean: Costa Rica is a small tropical country between two oceans. One side borders the warm Caribbean; on the opposite side is the abundant Pacific. Both offer opportunities for exploration and adventure. The Pacific coastline is the more extensive of the two, stretching for almost 750 miles.

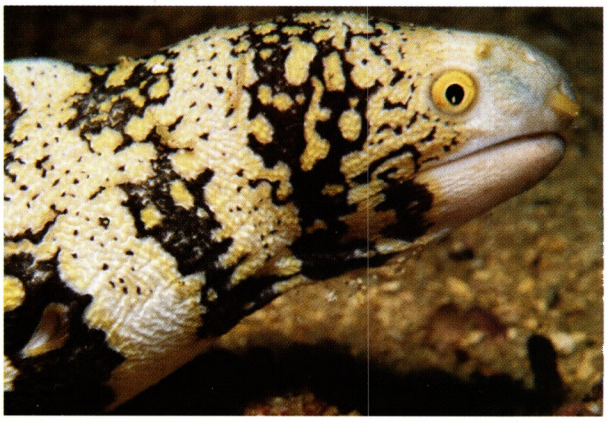
Guanacaste Region: In the northwest portion of the country is the Guanacaste Region, the center of Costa Rica mainland diving. Numerous dive operators and coastal resorts are clustered around the resort communities of Playa del Coco and Flamingo Beach. More than 60 dive sites have been charted in this area, most within a 10 to 20 minute boat ride from the resort. These sites range from coral reefs to rocky outcroppings, submerged seamounts and shallow coral gardens.

Hold onto Your Regulators and Be Prepared for the Greatest Diving in the Northern Hemisphere!

The marine life biodiversity is incredible and visitors often encounter frogfish, four species of moray eels, several Whitetip Reef Sharks, two species of angelfish and several giant schools of reef fish—all on the same dive! What is particularly fascinating is the mixture of species that encompass Caribbean, Pacific coastal and tropical Pacific waters—all in the same area.

The high point of any visit to the





Unusual marine life like the Snowflake Moray Eel (left) and Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks (below) are seen frequently in the waters of Costa Rica.



Guanacaste Region is to dive the offshore islands, where big animal encounters abound. The Bat Islands are a string of offshore rocky islets that jut out from Santa Rosa National Park, at the very northern reaches of the coastline. Here you'll find **Big Scare**, a dive site populated by several friendly Pacific Bull Sharks.

The Catalinas are a small cluster of rock islands toward the southern end of the Gulf of Papagayo. Here divers will find a large population of Whitetip Reef Sharks, schools of Bat, Eagle and Cownose Rays and often, Mantas.

Nicoya Peninsula: Nicoya is a large peninsula in the more central region of Costa Rica's Pacific Coast. It offers a general blend of outdoor activities combined with recreational diving. All-inclusive resorts provide an opportunity to enjoy sailing, tennis, snorkeling, scuba, fishing and other outdoor sports.

Osa Peninsula: Farther south on the Pacific Coast is the Osa Peninsula—a virtually untouched tropical paradise. Famous for its eco lodges, nature tours and river trips, Osa is also the home of the Cano Island Biological Reserve. Ten miles off the mainland coast, Cano is a fully protected natural paradise with an exceptionally beautiful reef bordering its shores. With depths ranging from 15 to 70 feet, these reefs offer an incredible diversity of fish life and marine creatures, including Mantas, Whitetip Reef Sharks, Whale Sharks, schools of jacks and sea snakes.

Coco Island: Coco is a mid-Pacific Ocean island, 250 miles from Port Puntarenas. Classified as a national park, Coco Island is uninhabited and remains in a totally natural state. The island is accessed by three live-aboard dive vessels.

The diving at Coco is nothing short of phenomenal. It is the natural habitat for Costa Rica's legendary schooling Hammerhead Sharks. These magnificently graceful animals can be seen swimming in schools of 200 to 600. Other big animal encounters include giant Mantas, Whale Sharks, Wahoo, Sailfish, Marble Rays, Whitetip Reef Sharks, Humpback Whales and dolphins.

More Marine Life Than Most Divers Will Experience in His or Her Diving Career... Wow. That's A Lot of Fish!

Caribbean coast: Costa Rica's smaller 130 mile Caribbean coast is an uncharted fron-



You'll Find Adventure at Every Step in Costa Rica's Vast Rain Forests—From Monkeys to Active Volcanoes





Howler monkeys (left), waterfalls (right) & volcanoes (below) are seen & heard daily.

tier for diving. This region is overshadowed by the Pacific Coast resort boom. Hotels are spotty, dive operations are just starting and virgin reefs await exploration.

Land attractions: Costa Rica is a gentle nation with a Latin flavor. With a modest population of three million residents, it has no army or navy and is often described as the Switzerland of Central America. The people (called Ticos) are friendly, well educated, industrious and the highest standard of living in Central America.

Costa Rica's terrain and climate are highly variable. A mountain range bisects the country, with lowlands along both coasts. The country offers an opportunity to explore fascinating rain forests, hike mountainous volcanoes or swim in warm seas along both coasts. Costa Rica is considered the eco tourism capital of the Western Hemisphere. It has 20 national parks, 8 wildlife refuges, forest reserves, protected areas and fauna sanctuaries.

Live volcano tours: Costa Rica is at the heart of one of the most active volcano regions on earth. There are 42 active volcanoes and 60 dormant ones. Several national parks have been created around active volcanoes, complete with viewing facilities, hotel accommodations, guided walks and educational lectures. Among the most popular are Arenal, Irazu and Poas. Even Coco Island is the rounded top of an ancient volcano. Visitors can hike to the rim of these geological phenomena and peer down into pools of molten lava spewing fumes of chlorine and sulfur.

Whitewater river rafting: There are at least five rivers that offer exciting, challenging whitewater river rafting. These rivers are rated by degree of difficulty, ranging from Class I to IV. Only one river is rated as Class V, for experts only. The thrill of whitewater rafting is difficult to describe but could be compared to a combination of riding a roller coaster and surfing a wave. The tours are a marvelous combination of serene river drifting punctuated by fast moving action. Many of the tours include an overnight stay at one of Costa Rica's many jungle lodges.

For Every Fish Underwater, You'll Find an Exciting Topside Counterpart...

Kayaking: Costa Rica offers three types of kayaking: whitewater kayaking for the adventurous; jungle river kayaking for the nature lover; and ocean kayaking for the sea going sportsperson.

Rain forest tours: The rain forests of Costa Rica have long been the country's major



Turtle nesting grounds (below) & great waves (right) are seen on both the Pacific & Caribbean shorelines.



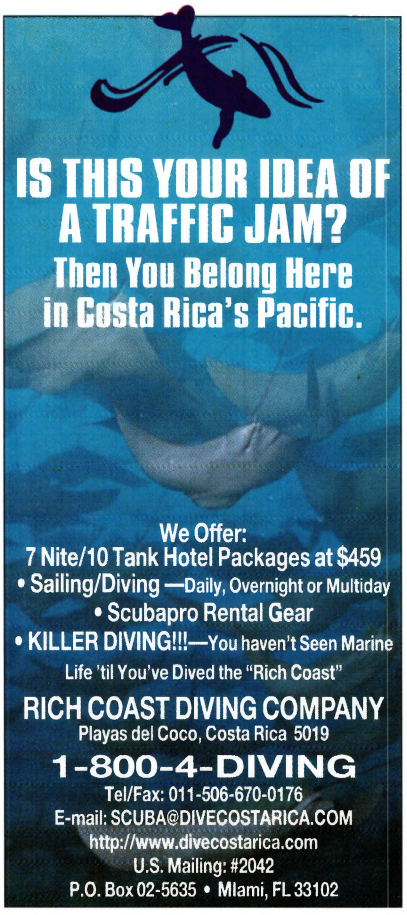


tourist attraction. Visitors come from all over the world to walk, hike and tour these magnificent ecological havens. And recently, a new dimension has been added with the construction of an aerial tram that carries visitors through the jungle canopy. The forests are home to a variety of exotic animals, including jaguar, howler monkeys, three-toed sloths, tapirs and many others. Equally fascinating are the rare jungle birds such as the scarlet macaw and keel-billed toucans.

Watersports: Equally alluring are the multitude of watersports to be found along the Pacific coastline. Much like Southern California, select beaches offer excellent surfing opportunities when conditions are right. Visitors can enjoy a variety of sailing cruises, windsurfing, swimming, snorkeling and other water oriented sports. Costa Rica has excellent fishing—both fresh and saltwater. Some of the major game fish of this region include Marlin, Wahoo, Sailfish, Tarpon and tuna.

Outdoor activities: Other activities popular in Costa Rica are bicycling, horseback riding, mountain hiking, birdwatching, motorcycle touring and natural history cruises.

Sightseeing: As for sightseeing, Costa Rica offers some of the most unusual activities imaginable, such as a tour of the



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butterfly farm, a visit to a coffee plantation or a tour of the country's fabulous Gold Museum, housing 2,000 pre-Columbian gold artifacts.

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GEOGRAPHY
Costa Rica is bordered by Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the southeast. It is located 1,115 miles from Miami which takes approximately 2 1/2 hours flight time.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS
Passport required. No visa required for U.S. citizens with roundtrip tickets.

CAR RENTALS
Upon arriving in Costa Rica you can rent a car at any of the agencies at Juan Santamaria International Airport (San Jose) or in the city of San Jose. Current driver's license is needed with credit card deposit. Most cars and four wheel drive vehicles are between $50 and $100 a day.

TAXI
Good Taxi service is available from the airports and in towns. As with any country or city ask what the fare will be to your destination before you get in the taxi.

CURRENCY
210 colones = $1.00 U.S.
U.S. dollars are accepted most anywhere in Costa Rica.

TELEPHONES
USA direct is available from most phones and the country code for Costa Rica is 506. From the U.S. you would have to dial 011-506 then the local phone number in Costa Rica.

WATER & ELECTRICITY
Water is drinkable throughout most of the country and electricity runs110 volt /60-cycle AC.

POPULATION
Approximately 3 million residents

GOVERNMENT
Costa Rica is a democratic republic and is set up like the U.S. in that it has independent executive, legislative and judicial branches.

COSTA RICA VISITOR INFORMATION

Costa Rica Tourist Board (I.C.T.)
Information Office in Plaza de la Cultura, 5th St. between Central & Second Ave.
Phones (506) 223-1733 Ext. 277 or (506) 222-1090

Main office in Costa Rica:
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HOT LINE
(for any emergency information, etc.)
in Costa Rica: **800-0123456**
Information in U.S.A.: **1-800-343-6332**

HOLIDAYS
Costa Rica is a Catholic country and its holidays are mostly church related. The Easter celebration (Holy Week) is considered the biggest holiday.

CLIMATE
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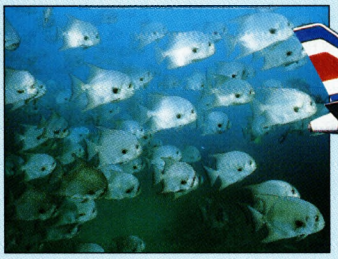
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LEISURE PRO'S BLUE REEF AGRESSOR DIVE COMPUTER

(Continued from Page 98)

time and is outlined in red. Should you ascend too quickly, the word SLOW will also appear in this window as a warning. Below it are two windows: the current depth (lower left) and maximum depth attained (lower right); both outlined in blue. At the top of the display, outlined in green, is the dive number, water temperature and total dive time.

To ensure you have ample battery power before you begin your dive, the Agressor provides a battery level window in the upper left corner, outlined in white. This feature is notably convenient, especially if you are about to embark on a multi-day dive on a live-aboard. No low battery surprises with this dive computer. To check the status, manually activate the Agressor by holding two contacts with moistened fingers. When the battery level window shows only one gray bar, it's time to change the battery.

BLUE REEF AGRESSOR DIVE COMPUTER

	Agressor
Price	$249.95
Case	Lightweight polycarbonate
Weight in Air	4.2 ounces
Method of Attachment	Wrist or hose mount
Displays	Digital, with icons and flashing arrows
Depth Range	Full operation from 0 to 220 feet
Decompression Model	Algorithm developed by Max Hahn, Ph.D.
Pre-Dive Scrolling	No decompression limits from 30 to 130 feet
Rate of Ascent Warning	Flashing SLOW
Altitude Range	Automatic adjustment from sea level to 10,000 feet
Decompression Stops	Numerical deco stop, depth and time
Battery Power	One 3 volt lithium cell; user replaceable
Computer Activation	Immersion in water or by touching contacts with moist fingertips
Low Battery Warning	Empty battery pictograph
Remarks	Digital and graphic oversized display, compartmented and color coded for readability. Also, an innovative Diver Pictograph for maximum data clarity.

The Agressor automatically adjusts for multi-dive profiles. A five minute surface interval signals the end of the first dive and dive planning information will begin to scroll across the display. The Agressor will remain active for 12 hours (24 hours for a decompression dive), counting any dives within that time period as multiple dives and updating no decompression time accordingly. During this period the do not fly icon will appear in the upper center of the display.

Should you enter decompression, the Diver Pictograph will begin to flash and the main window will show the stop depth and decompression time as the Agressor safely guides you through your ascent to the surface.

The Agressor stores up to nine dives in its log, which can be accessed after a five minute surface interval by holding contacts A and C (bottom right) for a few seconds.

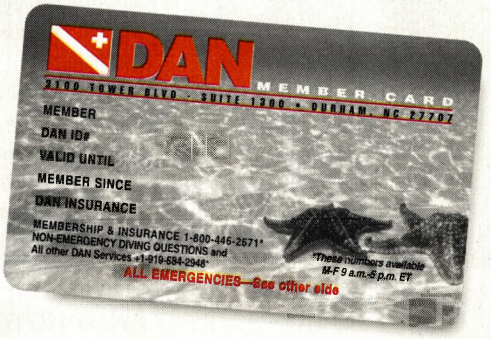
An exceptionally beneficial feature is the automatic altitude adjustment. The computer's internal monitoring circuit detects altitudes of up to 10,000 feet above sea level and automatically compensates to provide accurate no decompression/compression information. All you do is monitor your computer as usual.

CONSTRUCTION

The Blue Reef Agressor measures 2¾ by 2¾ by 1¾ inches, weighs about 4.2 ounces in air and, despite its dimensions, is remarkably comfortable and unobtrusive in the water. The rugged cover and built-in wrist strap are made of high impact, vulcanized rubber to protect against scrapes and knocks. The computer case is made of a durable polymer. The wide and user adjustable wrist strap has two stainless steel snaps and is contoured to the natural curve of the forearm.

(Continued on Page 141)

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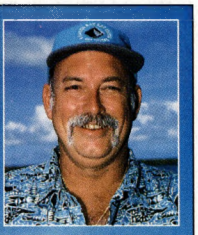
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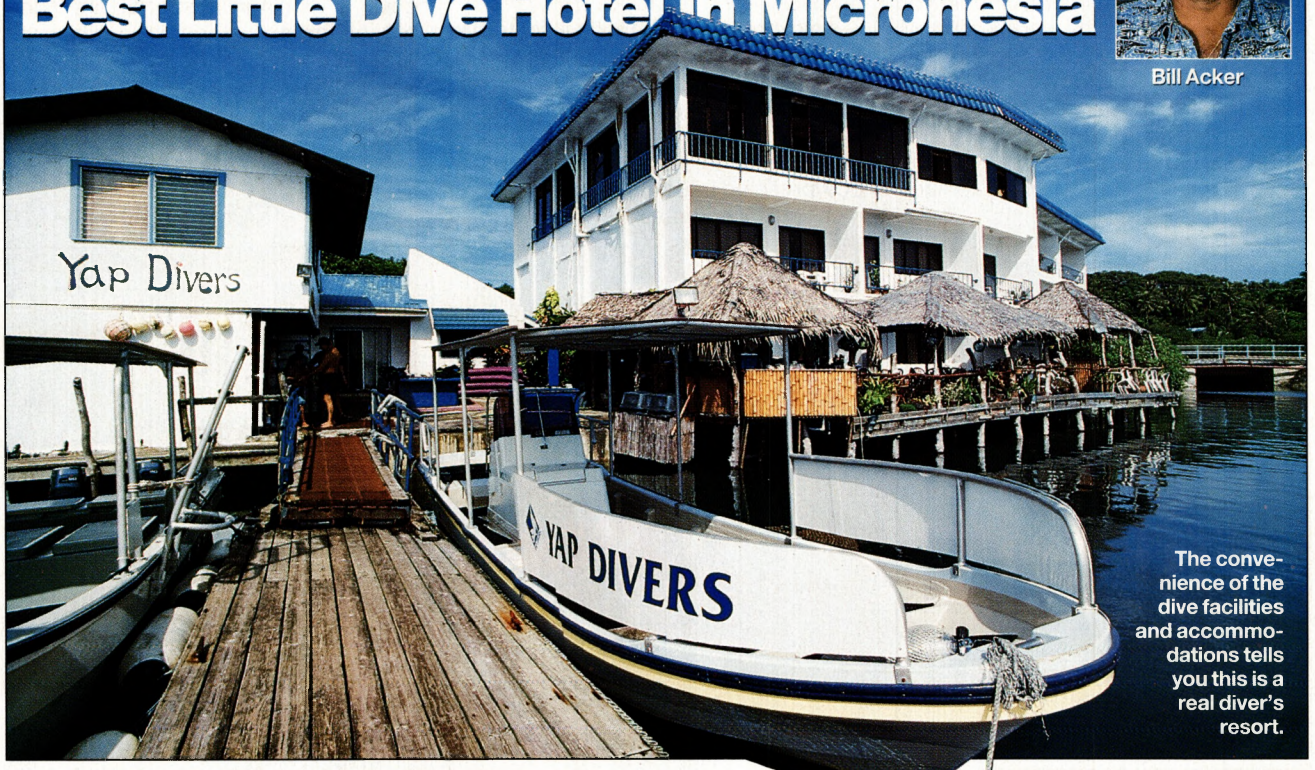
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Manta Ray Bay Hotel

Best Little Dive Hotel in Micronesia



Bill Acker



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Above: Yap Divers' dive center and dive boats are mere steps from the hotel.



Above: A guestroom with ocean view. Rooms include all creature comforts.



Above: A giant Manta Ray. Below: Traditional stone money bank in the jungle.





Above: Outdoor restaurant and bayside bar. Below: Traditional Yapese dancing.



TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

In the past 15 years we have witnessed the development and proliferation of Dedicated Dive Resorts—resort hotels designed by divers and specifically catering to divers. You can find them all over the Caribbean, on small islands, offshore atolls and remote sections of undeveloped coastlines. Yet in the Pacific they are rarer. When you find a really good one, it is worth noting.

Manta Ray Bay Hotel is just such a place—a Dedicated Dive Resort, tucked away in the remote southwestern corner of Micronesia. In fact, it is the best little dive hotel in the western Pacific.

Manta Ray Bay Hotel is on the island of Yap, one of the least commercialized tourist destinations in Micronesia. It lies halfway between Guam and Palau and is serviced by regularly scheduled jet flights on Continental Micronesia. If you happen to be headed for a diving vacation in Palau, there is no extra charge for a stopover in Yap and it would certainly be worth a few days' visit. Yap is totally different than Palau—different island culture, different local language, different diving attractions and certainly a different type of resort hotel.

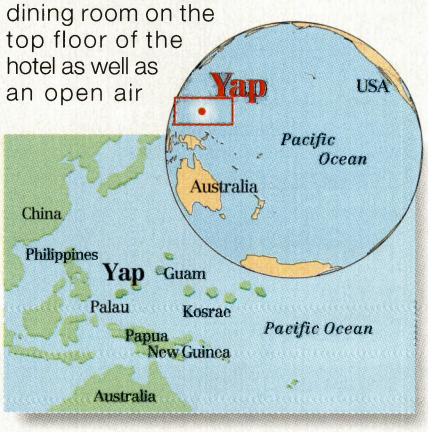
The hotel is right on the water's

edge, with a lovely view of the bay. It is close to downtown Colonia—within walking distance of numerous stores, the airline ticket office, a bank, supermarket and a few restaurants.

The hotel is small and compact—23 guestrooms in a three story building. It is the size that creates the air of intimacy and casual informality. Everyone knows your name after the first day. It is almost like checking in to a landlocked live-aboard.

The major difference is that all the guestrooms are exceptionally spacious and nicely furnished. They are equipped with every creature comfort imaginable—telephones, color TV, VCR player, air-conditioning, ceiling fans, mini fridge, built-in hairdryer, bathroom and shower. There are two kinds of rooms—ocean view and garden view (lower priced).

Manta Ray Bay Hotel operates its own restaurant, complete with a gourmet chef named Bill Munn. There is an indoor dining room on the top floor of the hotel as well as an open air



restaurant and bar on the first level, overlooking the harbor.

While Manta Ray Bay has no fancy tennis courts or Olympic sized pool, it does have the main ingredient for being a top rated Dedicated Dive Resort—a full service dive center on the hotel premises. What makes this hotel so great is that you can watch the dive staff loading the boats while you are having your breakfast.

Yap Divers began operation even before there was a hotel. And, over the past nine years, it has grown into a large, professionally run dive operation with five boats, a retail store, a scuba repair department and a special storage room for guests' dive gear.

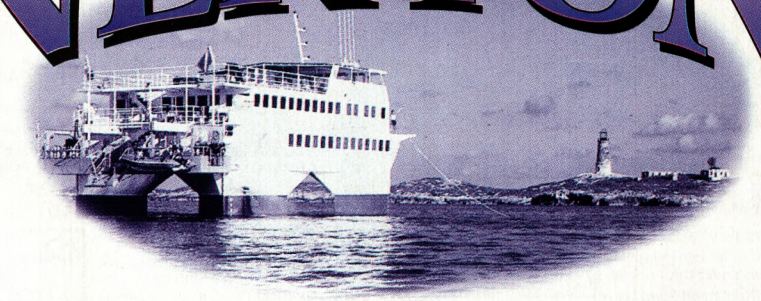
The dive center is adjacent to the hotel and has its own private boat dock and fueling station. The five dive boats are various lengths and capacities to efficiently accommodate any size dive group, large or small.

The latest addition to the Manta Ray Bay Hotel is a complete underwater photo and video center. Right off the ho-

(Continued on Page 114)

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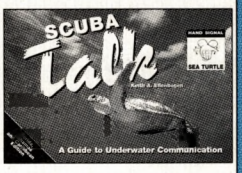
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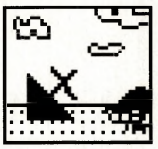
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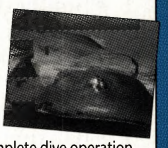
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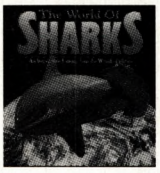
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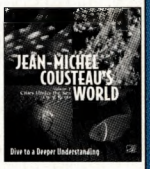
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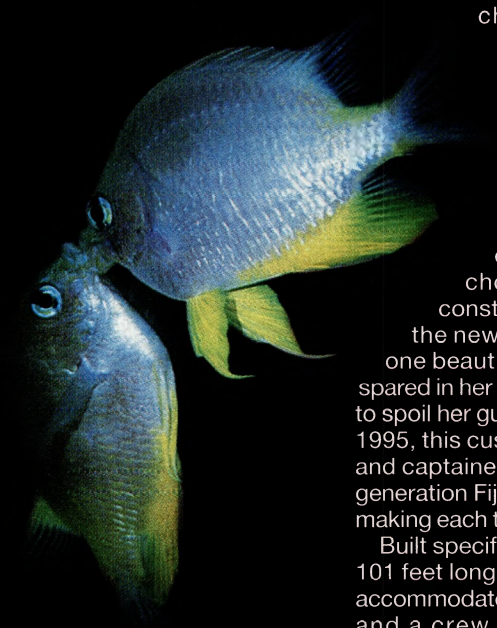
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call (213) 782-2245 or fax (213) 782-2556

Fiji's Elegant Sere



Fantastic Diving For Ten Pampered Guests

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



Top: After being spoiled by Fiji's fine diving, *Sere* guests can relax in luxury on the 101 foot live-aboard. Above: A territorial dispute brings a pair of damsels within kissing distance.

Your initial consideration when deciding where to spend your next dive vacation will be choosing a land based or live-aboard operation. There are advantages and disadvantages to both and many divers have a hard time making a decision. In recent years, live-aboards have evolved into a high quality diving choice. New dive boats are constantly being added. One of the newest is the *Sere* and she is one beautiful boat! No expense was spared in her design; she was built solely to spoil her guests. Launched in January 1995, this custom built vessel is owned and captained by Greg Lawlor, a fourth generation Fijian. He takes great pride in making each trip one to remember.

Built specifically for diving, the *Sere* is 101 feet long, with a 22 foot beam. She accommodates a maximum of ten divers and a crew of four. With this many square feet per diver, you quickly begin to realize what diving comfort is really about. It is very easy to be on a part of the boat and not see anyone else.

Four large, individually air-conditioned staterooms are below decks, two on each side of a long hallway. Each room has a large double bed with a single bunk above it. There are drawers under the bottom bunk for clothes. There are additional drawers in a desk/dresser on the opposite side of the room. The bathroom is very large and has its own private sink, toilet and a shower big enough for two.

A specially designed fifth stateroom is near the lounge on the middle deck. This "honeymoon suite" boasts a very large bed, private bath and several large windows on the port side.

The lounge on the middle deck has several large couches and chairs arranged around the video center. Divers can watch prerecorded videotapes or view the results of guest videos recorded on a previous dive. A large dining table is aft of the lounge and accommodates all the guests comfortably. Food is prepared in a very large kitchen below decks and brought up to the dining area. Both American and Fijian foods are served. The crew is also able to prepare meals for guests with special dietary needs.

For those who want to catch a little sun, there are lounge chairs on the forward sundeck and on the upper and lower aft sundecks.

At the *Sere*'s stern are two spiral staircases that lead to the dive deck. A large bench on the swimstep allows divers to comfortably sit down and put on their tanks. Once they are fully geared, they

simply stand up and take a giant stride into the warm Fijian waters. When guests return from the dive, their tanks are placed back on the bench and filled for the next dive. Fresh towels are available at all times, as they are constantly recycled through the boats' laundry system.

The *Sere* accommodates the special needs of the underwater photographer. Crew members hand you your camera and take it from you as you go in and out of the water. A freshwater rinse tank is near the two camera tables. There is one camera table outside and another inside, for more delicate camera systems.

Diving aboard the *Sere* is just about as good as it gets. Even though the boat is 101 feet long, Greg moors it right on top of most of the dive locations. This means you merely jump off the swimstep and descend to the dive site. On those few occasions when the *Sere* cannot be moored over the reef, a skiff is used to transport the divers to and from the site. All traveling to different areas is done at night in order to maximize the number of dives during the day.

Most of the diving is in or near an area in Fiji called Bligh Waters. This band of nutrient rich water, between the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, has an extremely high level of animal life. Each *Sere* trip differs slightly owing to divers' needs, weather and overall conditions.

It's hard to say which site is the best, everyone has his/her favorites. Fortunately, the *Sere* dives most of the favorite spots, such as Beqa and Astrolabe Lagoons, Wakaya, Namena, Savusavu, Taveuni, Lau Group and Vatulele.

Wakaya is one of our favorite Fijian critter dives. The main dive spot is a narrow channel where the tide exchanges. Large, deep walls at the end of the channel give shelter to Leaffish, Blue Ribbon Eels and friendly octopus. A large Hammerhead Shark frequents the area. Night dives here are spectacular, with possible sightings of crabs, lobsters, shrimp, cuttlefish, octopus, squid and nudibranchs.

Gau is a very popular drift dive and is where the *Sere* makes its village trip. The *Sere*'s skiff takes you to one end of the 60 to 90 foot deep channel, drops you off and picks you up at the other end. The current is usually mild and features schools of sharks and Barracuda.

A two to three hour village trip is usually scheduled during the tidal changes. Here you have the opportunity to meet and be entertained by some of the friendliest people on earth. You can drink *kava*, dance and listen to music performed by the villagers.

Namena Island has several dive sites around it but the best is **Grand Central Station**. The edge of the deep channel, where it dumps into the deep blue, is filled with large schools of Barracuda.

One of our favorite bommies is called **Kansas**, because of the yellow soft corals that completely cover the top. The sides of Kansas are a macro photographer's paradise, where you'll find yourself trying to decide which animal to photograph first.

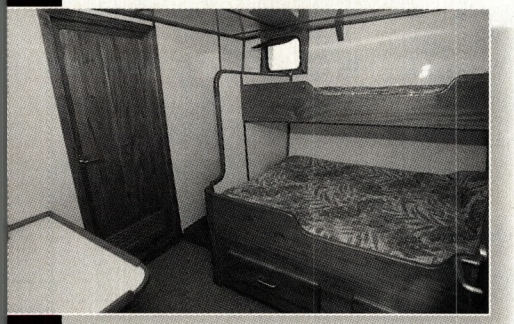
E-6 is by far the best dive spot in Fiji and, weather permitting, is one of *Sere*'s stops through the Bligh Waters. This 3,000 foot high seamount requires a special mooring setup.

The best dive spot on E-6 is **Cathedral Cave**. It starts on the face of E-6 at about 40 feet, goes into the reef a short distance and then turns back out to the deep wall. The actual shape of the cave looks very much like a bent horseshoe. The cave can handle six divers at one time and has some of the most diverse animal life we have ever seen. We have spent at least 30 dives in this cave and always find something new to photograph. We have seen five foot tall soft corals with base stems more than ten inches thick. On these soft coral branches, we have found coral cowries, camouflaged shrimp, fish and crabs. The cave walls are loaded with nudibranchs, flatworms, sponges and every type of soft coral imaginable.

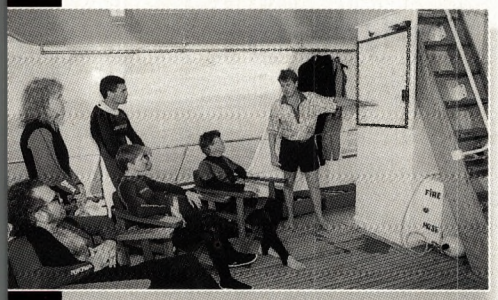
The *Sere* is based in Suva, Fiji. It is easily reached via Air Pacific's ten hour flight from Los Angeles to Nadi. You then transfer to Suva via either Sunflower Airlines or Air Fiji. The *Sere* is based near the Tradewinds Hotel, where you can stay if you arrive early or plan on doing some additional sightseeing after the trip.

The luxury and comfort offered by the *Sere* makes live-aboards the diving answer. Now the question is, "How fast can you pack your gear to leave?"

To book your dream vacation, contact Fiji's longest established live-aboard operation, Captain Greg Lawlor, Mollie Dean Cruises Holdings, Ltd., P.O. Box 3256, Lami, Fiji Islands; (800) 443-0799, 011 (679) 361-171, fax 011 (679) 361-137.

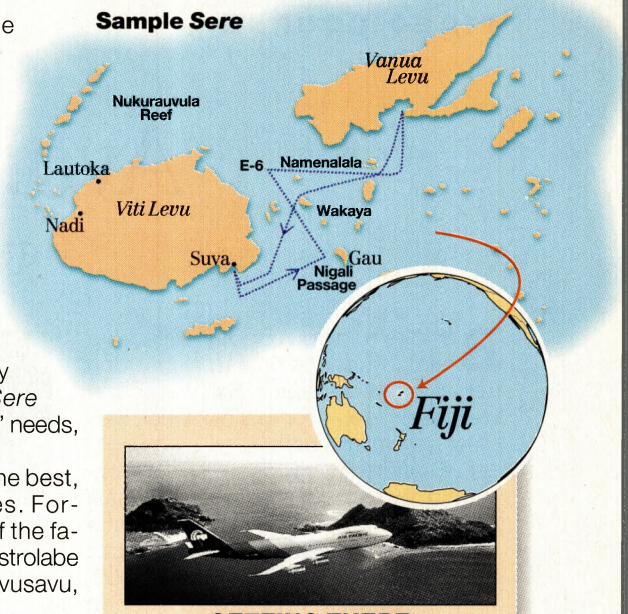


Above: The *Sere*'s guests reside in simple elegance in four ensuite staterooms; a fifth ensuite stateroom (not shown) provides a double bed and large windows.



Above: Greg Lawlor, the boat's captain and owner, gives a dive briefing. Below: Spiral stairs lead to a large dive deck, where guests have ample room and a water level swimstep for an easy entry.





GETTING THERE

Flights to Fiji are available through Air Pacific and Qantas. The nonstop Air Pacific flight from Los Angeles to Fiji's International Airport in Nadi is approximately 10 hours. The outer islands can be reached via the local carriers, Air Fiji and Sunflower.

Air Pacific
(800) 227-4446

Qantas
(800) 227-4500

Avoiding Floods

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM CHURCH

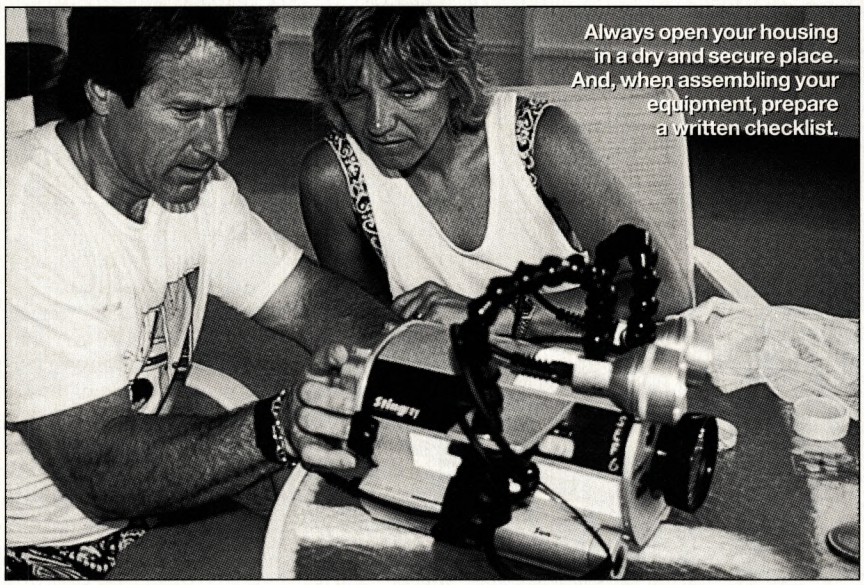
Besides ruining your day, a flooded camcorder can be a total loss or a very expensive repair. Saltwater and electronics aren't compatible; when they meet, saltwater wins.

I've suffered two floods. One was major and my expensive camcorder was a total loss. The other was minor (just a small amount of saltwater) but the repair bill for the CCD VX3 was more than $800. Both floods were my fault. I'd skipped one or more of the following steps:

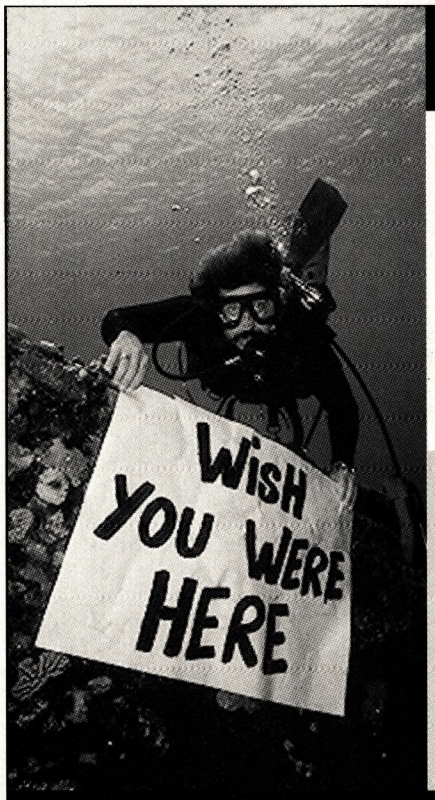
1 Prepare a written checklist for assembling your system. When assembling, follow this list step by step.

2 If controls that penetrate the housing aren't user serviceable, ask the manufacturer how often they should be serviced and the location of the nearest repair facility.

3 Before a trip, service all user removable O-rings. Wipe off the



Always open your housing in a dry and secure place. And, when assembling your equipment, prepare a written checklist.



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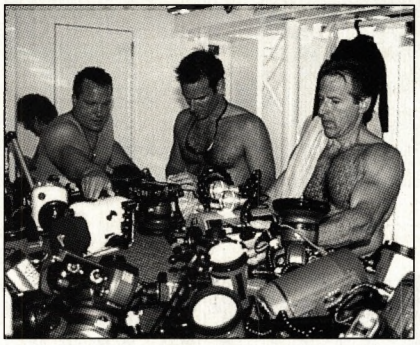
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grease and use your fingertips to force the O-rings from their grooves. Use a paper towel between your fingers and the O-ring to increase traction. Avoid using dental picks and other sharp instruments that could gouge the O-ring groove. You can sometimes use the edge of a credit card to remove an O-ring. Wash the O-rings in water and detergent and inspect them for nicks, abrasions or cracks. If you even suspect the O-ring is damaged,



The wet, distracting and crowded camera table of a live-aboard is a dangerous place to open your video housing.

replace it. Clean and lightly lubricate (see the owner's manual) O-rings. Clean and lubricate again whenever the O-rings become sandy or dry.

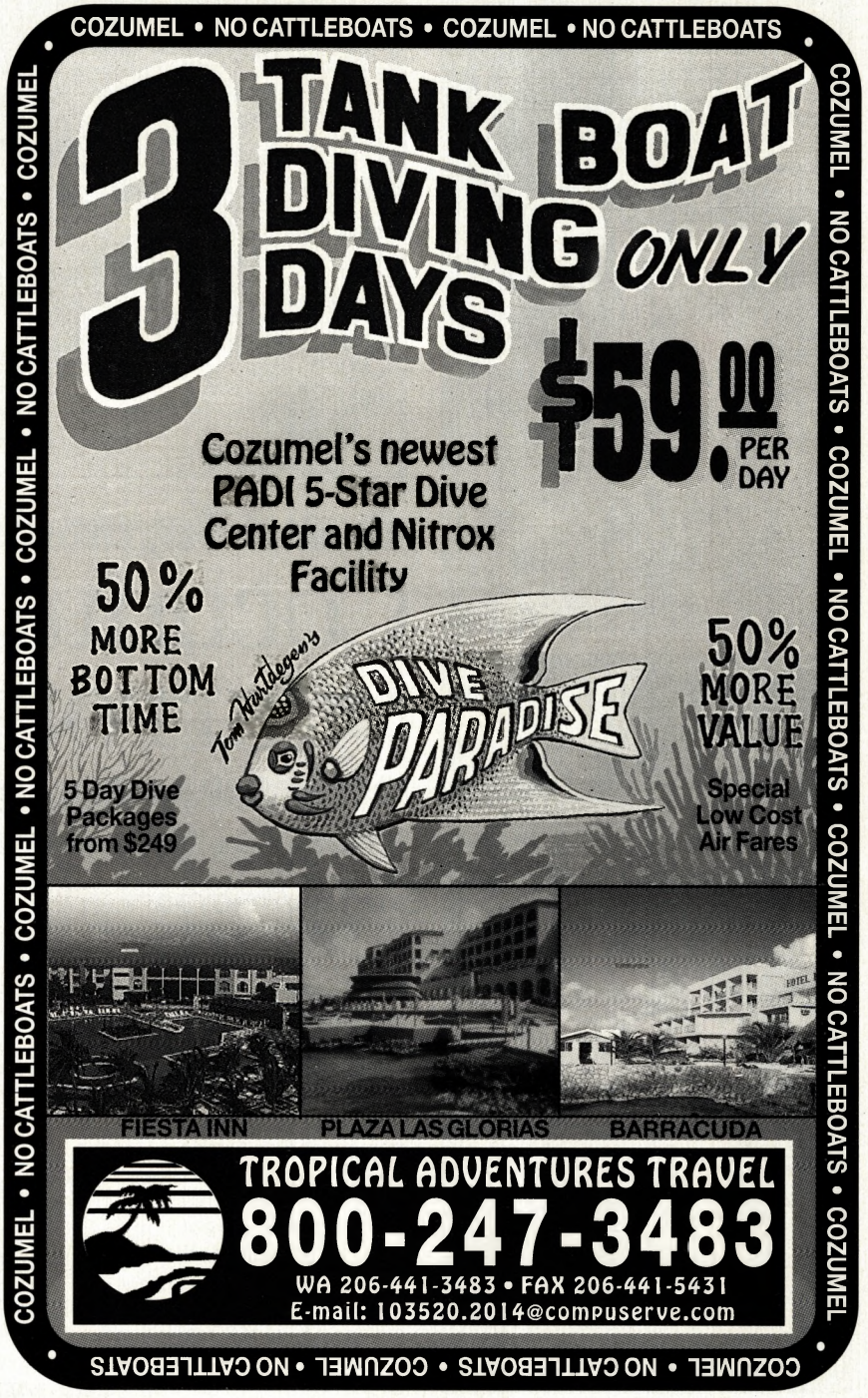
4 Always test the empty housing in a camera rinse tank before diving, especially after flying. Before the test, make sure you have replaced or tightened any air vent plugs. (A faulty O-ring in a new housing port caused my major flood. Had I performed the rinse tank test, I wouldn't have ruined my camcorder.)

5 Don't install your camcorder in the housing while engaged in conversation or when watching TV. Concentrate solely on assembling your system as you follow your checklist. Let your mind wander and a control cable could be pinched under the housing lid (this was the cause of my $800 flood). You might forget to replace an O-ring or you might forget to replace or close an air vent plug.

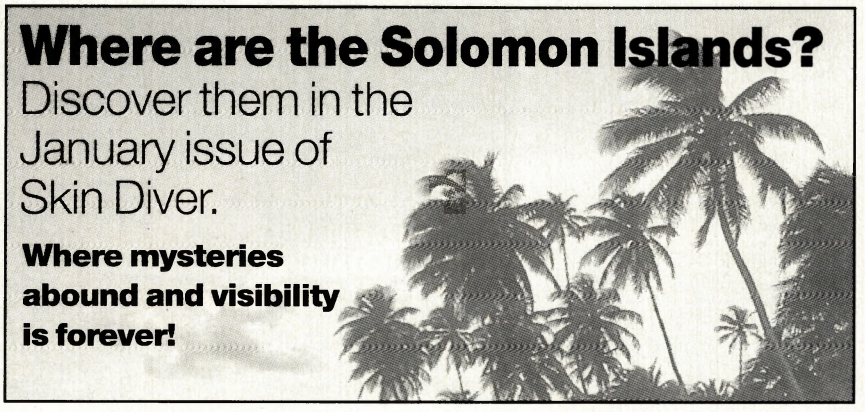
6 Before entering the water, explain to all who will listen that, if you return to the boat immediately and hand your housing up with the port aimed down, it should be kept in the port down position. The idea is to trap any water in the port. (Failing to do this was part of the reason for my major flood damage. I approached the boat with the housing aimed port down but couldn't communicate with the Spanish speaking boatman. He took the housing, aimed it at the sky and the water in the dome port ran down over the camcorder.)

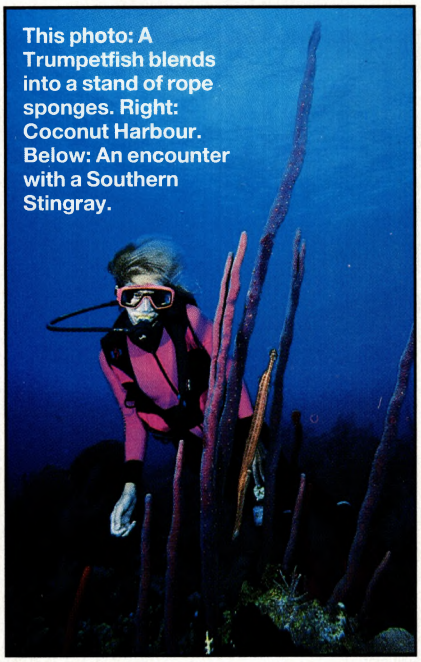
7 Once in the water, submerge to about 10 to 20 feet with the housing aimed port down. Hold the housing

(Continued on Page 113)



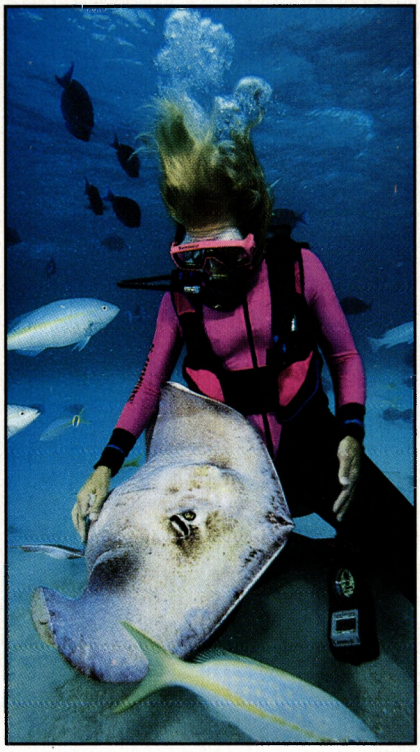
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This photo: A Trumpetfish blends into a stand of rope sponges. Right: Coconut Harbour. Below: An encounter with a Southern Stingray.





Grand Cayman's Coconut Harbour & Parrots Landing

Affordable Accommodations, Diverse Diving Options

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALT STEARNS



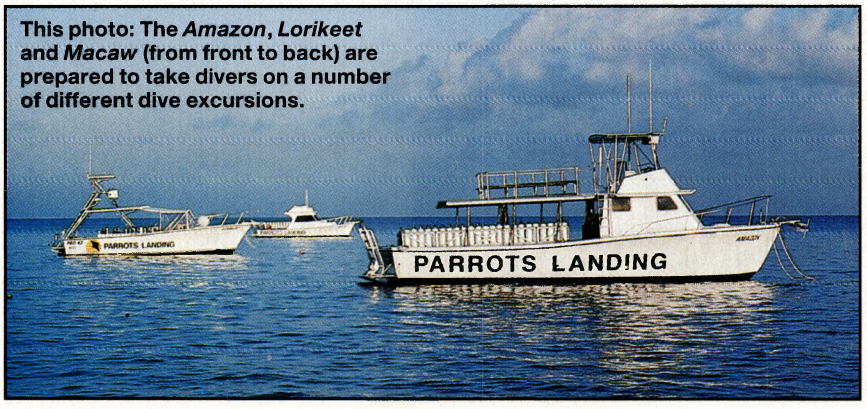
Choosing a resort and dive operation that will meet your Grand Cayman vacation expectations can sometimes be tough, especially when you're looking for a combination that won't destroy your budget. One of the favorites for divers from the U.S. is Coconut Harbour.

Since it opened some eight years ago, Coconut Harbour has had some of the most agreeable rates on Grand Cayman's West Side. At the same time, it remains a true dedicated dive resort.

Coconut Harbour is just the right size—offering a total of 39 guestrooms with studio style floorplans. Each is comfortably furnished with two full and/or queen sized beds, air-conditioning, carpeting, ceiling fan, telephone, shower and bath, as well as a small dining area and kitchenette (complete with cooking and serving utensils). Four of the units, the Ocean View Rooms, feature a slightly larger floorplan with sliding glass doors facing the ocean. The other rooms overlook a large freshwater swimming pool with a spa encircled by a wide, wooden sundeck and attractive foliage. But, as any avid vacationing diver knows, everything boils down to diving opportunities, which are in abundance off Grand Cayman.

Although the walking distance from George Town is a mere three-quarters of a mile, the real significance of Coconut Harbour's location is its proximity to convenient and dynamic shore diving. Waldo's Reef, **Eden Rock** and **Devil's Grotto**, vigorous ecosystems rich in assorted small invertebrates, fish, sponges and corals, are all found just offshore, some beginning in less than four feet of water.

Parrots Landing, one of Grand Cayman's most prominent watersport opera-



This photo: The *Amazon*, *Lorikeet* and *Macaw* (from front to back) are prepared to take divers on a number of different dive excursions.

tors, maintains a full service satellite facility for the benefit of any guest taking part in a Parrots Landing/Coconut Harbour dive package. All that's necessary for guests to sign up for diving is completion of their initial registration at the Coconut Harbour shop. From there, simply choose between unlimited free tanks for shore diving and Parrots Landing's complete boat diving schedule.

Parrots Pick boat program: Using an impressive fleet of six dive boats, Parrots Landing can meet the varying needs of divers ranging from novice to advanced. Morning trips leave the dock at 8:00 for choice wall sites off the west and southwestern half of the island; 8:30 am from Governors Harbour for North Wall sites. The morning trip can be followed with an afternoon trip to **Stingray City**; a two tank trip to shallower sites on either **Northwest Point** or the Southside; or one or more afternoon/night shore dives. For those opting to skip the morning regimen but still wishing to dive the walls later in the day, a two tank afternoon trip is offered.

The Parrots Pick program allows divers to choose the site and the kind of diving they wish to do. If a group diving **North Wall** wants to visit **Eagle Ray Pass** or **Lemon Drop-off**, it can. If that site is taken, the boat will move to a comparable alternate site such as **Wayne's World**, **Gail's Mountain** or **Chinese Wall**. The same goes for West Wall trips. As a courtesy to all its diving guests, Parrots Landing provides shuttle service (between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm) to and from the guests' accommodations.

For the more experienced crowd, the Pick repertoire includes the Advanced Boat option. The philosophy is that divers should be allowed to exercise more freedom during their dives (while observing both Parrots Landing and Cayman Islands Watersports Operators Association guidelines). Buddy teams with computers can perform two deep, unguided no decompression, multi-level dives. During these wall dives Parrots' divemasters often act more like underwater sentries, although they are more than happy to provide guided tours for those who wish this service.

Parrots Landing also offers a three tank dive excursion for advanced divers on the Pro 42, *Lorikeet*. Each Friday and Sunday she leaves the dock at 9:30 am (with a box lunch provided) returning around 2:30 pm. With this special arrangement, the dives (group's choice) can range from the Northside to the Southside.

For shallow dives in the 15 to 50 foot range, few places are finer than the Southside. A large portion of its 20 mile reef is virtually unexplored. Here are some of the most extraordinary spur and groove formations I have seen. Several sites, from **Spotts Caves** to **Pedro's Castle** and more than a dozen sites in between, have imposing alleyway formations with numerous short, interconnecting tunnels and swim-throughs. The upper ridges of the spurs offer some of Grand Cayman's most splendid Elkhorn Coral formations. Because the depth drops below 55 feet, bottom time is extensive, even after two deep dives.

If Friday and/or Sunday doesn't fit your schedule, additional special charters can be arranged for small groups. Furthermore, all those interested in this option are required to have or rent a dive computer and be referred by a divemaster (judging your dive skills in advance) or the shop. The program can be an advantage for divers, including underwater photographers, who simply wish to dive with fewer restrictions.

Coconut Harbour: In the morning, Coconut Harbour's Blue Parrot Bar & Grill (adjacent to the pool and dive shop) sets out a complimentary breakfast of assorted cereals, muffins, toast and

(Continued on Page 116)





Galapago Inn

Setting the Standard for Cozumel Hospitality...

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN

The Galapago Inn is Cozumel's place for divers—an inviting whitewashed oasis nestled against the blue Caribbean. For more than 20 years the Galapago Inn has been catering to divers, refining the service and facilities to a point nearing perfection. This is a place where special racks for drying wetsuits are fitted to each balcony and spacious gear lockers are provided close to the boats, thoughtfully convenient for divers. It is a rare place, where Spanish colonial simplicity and charm are combined with modern quality and comfort. The Galapago Inn is a place where you can count on the same high standard everywhere, from rooms to meals to diving.

With more than 50 rooms, it is small enough that guests receive personal attention. Four digit numbers are definitely not needed here to keep track of your room or your place on the dive boat. Managers Tim and Patti Massimino head a gracious staff. The Spanish flavor of the architecture, with its graceful archways and secluded courtyards, is pleasing to the eye. The rooms are large, with cool, terra cotta tile floors, Mexican tile trim and lacquered leather tables and chairs. Each room is complete with air-conditioning, ceiling fan and a mini-refrigerator. The table and chairs on the large private balconies provide another place to relax and enjoy the splendid view. The bathrooms are large and well appointed. Although water conservation is important, as on any island, the water in the shower comes out hot and strong. A pitcher is provided for bottled water, which is available anytime from a supply outside the restaurant. Two items absent from every room are telephones and television, an excellent step toward true relaxation. Telephone and fax service are available in the lobby area. A satellite TV is available in the bar if you feel compelled to watch.



Top: An aerial view of the Galapago Inn with all seven dive boats awaiting guests. The inn features personal service as well as a schedule and facilities that cater exclusively to a diver clientele. Right: A relaxing view of the pure blue ocean and Galapago Inn's pleasing grounds and beachscape.

The restaurant has upstairs and downstairs sections, both overlooking the water. Meal times and the dive schedule have been integrated to avoid conflicts. There is plenty of time for a leisurely breakfast before the dive boats begin loading, featuring a buffet of freshly prepared food, including French toast, eggs, sausage, cereal and fruit. A special divers' lunch, featuring Maya cuisine, is ready when the boats re-

turn around 1:00 pm. The regular lunch menu is also available. Dinner is a sit down affair in the upstairs restaurant with two entrees offered each evening. Although the Galapago Inn includes meals, it is not an all-inclusive resort. Drinks, for instance, are not included and after diving entertainment is not provided.

SCUBA COZUMEL: The resort's in-house dive operation is Scuba Cozumel. A tour through the exceptionally well organized dive shop reveals why Scuba Cozumel has been designated a PADI Five Star Facility. A separate room contains four spotlessly maintained air compressors, two of them massive 50 cubic feet per minute units. A five stage filter system ensures each bottle is filled with only the purest air. Neat rows of aluminum 80 and 63 cubic foot tanks stand ready, properly inspected and filled. In the main shop, separate racks contain high quality Sea Quest and Sherwood rental equipment. Tools are arrayed in order over the clean workbench, where regulators and other equipment are maintained. This is obviously a shop where things are done properly, a place where well trained and dedicated people work. All levels of PADI certification and instruction are available, from the Discover Scuba resort course to—and

...and an International Standard of Diving Excellence

including—the Instructor Development Course. Referral programs for NAUI, SSI and NASDS are also available.

THE DIVE BOATS: The Galapago fleet includes seven fiberglass boats, each custom built and designed expressly for diving. I was able to spend some time on each boat and dive from three of them. I was impressed by the quality of the boats and the professional manner in which they are operated and maintained. All of the boats are diesel powered, with mechanics on staff to ensure maximum reliability. The boats, like everything else at the Galapago Inn, are spotlessly clean. Their big aluminum dive ladders position the bottom step perfectly for your feet as you approach the boat at the end of the dive. Comfortable seating is spread around the boat, both in and out of the sun. Rinse barrels are available for cameras and video equipment. The emergency oxygen and first aid kits are stored ashore and checked before they are brought aboard each day. All of the boats are in constant contact by radio with the dive shop.

THE DIVING

Drift diving is the name of the game in Cozumel, even though the currents are sometimes very mild. It is a relaxing way to dive, eliminating the need to swim against the current or navigate back to the boat. The Galapago divemasters do an excellent job of organizing and leading the dives, giving space to divers who are comfortable and staying close to those who prefer closer attention. The fact that some current is normally present also means the water is very clear. More than 100 feet of visibility is normal, with frequent days of startling clarity.

Palancar Reef, protected by the national park, is the heart of diving off Cozumel. The dive sites include deep, dramatic drop-offs, towering coral pinnacles, arches and shallow coral gardens. A wide variety of reef fish, pelagics and invertebrates can be seen on every dive, including parrotfish, jacks, wrasse, grunts, moray eels and angelfish.

The Galapago Inn dive package includes a two tank trip each day, with tanks, weights and weightbelts provided. Unlimited shore diving is also part of the package and is great fun. A special entry grotto makes shore diving as easy as getting into a pool. Many divers take advantage of the opportunity to get in a warm-up dive on the day they arrive. It lets you sort your gear out and get yourself properly weighted for the conditions. Although coral growth is sparse next to the inn, there is a lot of life, including a big Barracuda that calls the pier pilings home. It is also a fun night dive, especially if you bring along a video camera or still camera set-up for macro or close-up. Octopus are seen on nearly every night dive here, as well as Spotted Drums and Reef Squid. Night dives on the reef, scheduled three times a week, are available for a small extra charge. Twilight dives are available on the same basis.

More than three-quarters of the divers who visit the Galapago Inn return. What brings people back for their third or fourth trips? I think it is the quality that underlies everything about the Galapago Inn as well as its refreshing lack of glitz. The rooms are spacious, comfortable and scrupulously clean; the restaurants have great atmosphere and food; the dive shop is properly equipped and organized; the dive boats are well designed and maintained; and the staff is super. And, of course, the clear water and colorful reefs make diving a delight.

For more information, call (800) 847-5708 from anywhere in the U.S. or (713) 783-3305 from outside the U.S. Or, write to the Galapago Inn care of Aqua-Sub Tours, P.O. Box 630608, Houston, Texas 77263. More information is also available on the Internet at http://www.galapago.com.

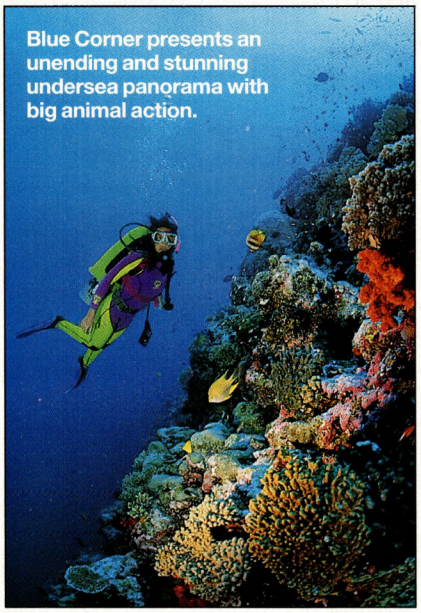


Reef Star **(above left), the newest addition to the Galapago Inn dive fleet, is a 50 foot, twin diesel dive boat with every amenity for safe, comfortable diving.**



Palau Pacific Resort's pool and grounds create an atmosphere of sublime tropical relaxation.





Blue Corner presents an unending and stunning undersea panorama with big animal action.

Palau Pacific Resort

Luxury and a Diver's Tropical Paradise

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY AL HORNSBY

If divers were to list the features of the best diving spots in the world, they would undoubtedly include: remote, pristine location; rich, tropical environment; deserted beaches with little evidence of human development; clear water; and profuse marine life. What might not make the list would be the necessity of having a world-class, luxury resort nearby.

However, if we are talking about Palau—one of the world's most exciting dive destinations by any standard—that last mention is exactly what we would find. On a beautiful, curving beach just a short boat trip from Palau's most popular dive spots is one of the most impressive resorts found anywhere—Palau Pacific.

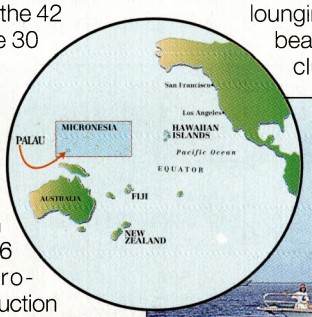
The 160 room resort sits on its own private beach on the quiet side of Koror, Palau's main island. The setting is something out of a South Seas movie: tropical landscaping, coconut palms and island-motif. PPR's design creates an atmosphere of utter luxury and relaxation.

The air-conditioned rooms and suites are designed to take full advantage of the beautiful, natural location. The amenities rank with the best hotels anywhere—ceiling fans, ensuite hottubs, private balconies, mini-bars, turndown service, fresh flowers and more. There's a complete fitness center, tennis and volleyball courts, retail stores and a beauty salon.

PPR's poolside bar and restaurant give the word "atmosphere" new meaning. And, for the ultimate romantic evening, there's a private King and Queen dinner, served on the beach with all the special touches—right down to the strolling guitar players.

Palau Pacific Resort doesn't forget that divers are an important part of its business. Splash, a PADI Five Star Dive Center, sits right at the base of the PPR dock. Splash operates two modern, comfortable boats; the 42 foot *Splash* and the 30 foot *Mesekiu*.

Just steps from Splash is Photo Palau, the resort's own photo center, managed by Bert and Jan Yates. With camera rentals, E-6 and color print processing, photo instruction and video production, Photo Palau has virtually everything the serious (or beginning) U/W photographer could need during a dive vacation.





The 42 foot *Splash* transports divers in comfort and luxury.

Divers rave about their trips to Palau and PPR. A typical day begins with a beautiful sunrise; breakfast from the poolside restaurant's sumptuous buffet; a quick walk to the dock (dive gear has been stored and will be loaded onto boats by the staff); and a 30 to 45 minute ride through the peaceful Rock Islands to Palau's most famed dive sites. Today, it might be **Blue Corner**, a spot on the outer wall where Gray Reef Sharks, schooling Barracuda and huge Napoleon Wrasse congregate. Tomorrow, perhaps it will be **Big Drop-off**, where a ride on the gentle current sweeps divers past huge gorgonian fans, colorful soft corals and cruising Green Turtles. The next day, there's **Peleliu Corner**, a steep, rugged wall covered with Black Coral and thick with schools of Bigeye Trevally and Gray Reef and Blacktip Sharks. After a second dive there will be snorkeling at **Jellyfish Lake** with millions of nonstinging jellyfish.

Back at PPR, complete the day by lounging around the pool, relaxing on the beach or trying a variety of activities including snorkeling, ocean kayaking or windsurfing, followed by dinner, music and a moonlight stroll.

For more information on the Palau Pacific Resort contact Tropical Adventures Travel at (800) 247-3483, (206) 441-3483 or fax (206) 441-5431. You can e-mail 103520.2014@compuserve.com.

VIDEO COURSE

(Continued from Page 107)

over your head and look into the port for water droplets. (I do this several times during the dive.) If you see droplets inside the port, keep the housing port down and return to the boat. Tell whoever takes the housing from you to keep it facing port down (step 6).

8 The dive deck of a live-aboard is a dangerous place to open your video housing. Other divers are flinging droplets all over as they dump their dripping cameras on the camera table and pull off their wetsuits. Also, someone always goes crazy with an airhose and blows droplets everywhere. Never open the housing on deck when other divers are removing dive gear or using an airhose

9 Towel dry your hair and fingers before removing the camcorder from its housing. Imagine leaning over your exposed camcorder and having a drop of water fall from your hair or a wet finger onto a control button.

10 If you assemble your housed camera system in an air-conditioned room and will be going outside where it is hot and humid, use a hairdryer to blow low pressure warm air over the camera and inside the housing before sealing it.

11 Don't take a cold, unhoused camcorder from an air-conditioned room outside to warm, humid air. Condensation can form and the moisture alert will temporarily disable the camcorder. If you must take the camcorder outside, wrap it in a towel and give it time to warm up.

12 Last but not least, put a copy of this article inside your housing so you can refresh your memory before your next trip.

Dive Notes

NITROX TRAINING AND DIVING AT COCO ISLAND: *Undersea Hunter* and *Sea Hunter*, which explore fabled Coco Island, now offer nitrox courses, certifications and equipment.

Divers can now have enriched air in their tanks, use their own regulators and enjoy three dives with the Hammerheads each day.

For further information, contact See & Sea Travel, Inc., 50 Francisco Street #205, San Francisco, CA 94133 or call (415) 434-3400, fax (415) 434-3409, e-mail divxprt@ix.netcom.com or visit on the Internet at http://www.divxprt.com.



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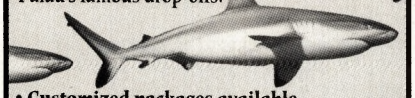
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MANTA RAY BAY HOTEL

(Continued from Page 101)

tel lobby, Manta Visions offers a variety of services, including professionally edited videos, E-6 film processing, photo and video instruction. If you are not into underwater photography but wish to bring home the memories, you can always purchase one of their videotapes.

Now, you might wonder, "What is a full blown Dedicated Dive Resort doing in Yap?" The answer is obviously an opportunity to enjoy some really superb diving. Yap's main and major attraction is, of course, the giant Manta Rays—for which the hotel was named.

Yap is truly Manta Central—home to an estimated 100 Manta Rays that gather in various channels that lead from the open ocean to Yap's inner lagoons. What makes these magnificent creatures so special is that Yap's mantas congregate at various cleaning stations and feeding spots on a daily basis. Visiting divers have an opportunity to view these creatures at close range and often in crystal clear water (incoming tide).

During the mating season, the mantas often congregate in groups of 10 to 15—forming long head to tail trains that sweep through the channels.

In addition to the congregating mantas, Yap offers superb wall diving along the outside edge of the barrier reef, elegant Eagle Rays (often in groups), spectacular lionfish in abundant numbers, schools of Bigeye Jacks, big turtles, Whitetip Reef Sharks snoozing on the bottom and cleaning stations for Gray Reef Sharks. Add to this menu a night dive, exploring **Yap Caverns**, and you have quite an interesting week of adventures. The hotel has published its own 40 page *Dive & Snorkeling Guide* to Yap's 30 best dive sites plus hints on diving with the mantas.

Yap is as fascinating on land as it is underwater, for this is an island lost in time. Virtually untouched by the plastic culture of glitzy tourism, Yap's residents have been able to maintain their heritage and traditions.

Yap is the only island in the world where stone money (called *rai*) was created and used as a trading currency. The tradition dates back almost 2,000 years and the island villagers still maintain stone money banks deep in the jungle. The money consists of large, disk shaped chunks of handcarved stone that range from pizza sized to wagon wheel sized. A hole through the center of the stone disks provides a method for transport (large pieces are carried on a pole by several men). The largest stone money pieces are 10 feet in diameter! The stone

(Continued on Page 115)

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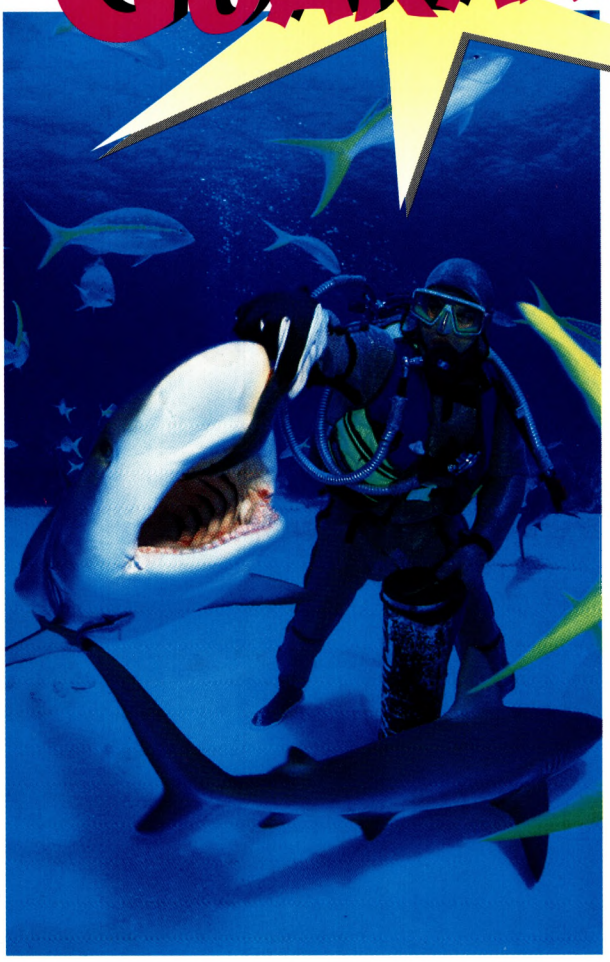
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The Dolphin Dive is a magical open ocean scuba encounter with man's best marine friend, the Atlantic Bottlenose dolphin. Along a shallow coral reef, divers have the rare chance to interact with a dolphin in their natural habitat. Sparkling clear water provides the ultimate photo-op for underwater still photographers and video enthusiasts alike.

Shark Junction is an adrenaline pumping experience where a dozen or more Caribbean reef sharks typically surround the UNEXSO staff diver. They are attracted to the scene by years of hand-feeding to assure a reliable interaction. Shark Junction brings this apex predator up-close-and-personal. For the ultimate video souvenir, UNEXSO photo pros are on hand to document the adventure.

Theo's Wreck is an intact 230 foot freighter on the edge of a dramatic vertical wall. Adorned with colorful encrusting sponge and coral, and home to moray eels and butterflyfish, this massive shipwreck is in only 100 feet of water.



While experienced divers thrill to dives like these, UNEXSO offers complete programs for the beginning diver as well, including a full range of specialty courses, PADI and NAUI certification programs, and referrals. Enjoy a world of tropical dive adventure with those who do it best... the Underwater Explorers Society!

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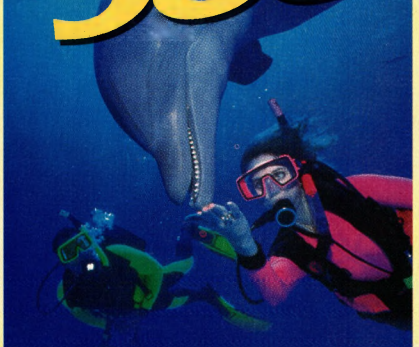
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Our island is embraced by beautiful turquoise waters. Windsurfing and sailing, snorkeling and glassbottom boating, parasailing and jet skiing are just some of the water sports available.

Ride the sea horses down tree-lined trails to a deserted beach where you are free to gallop along the sand and surf.

Paddle sea kayaks through mangrove creeks, take in wildlife, and enjoy a picnic lunch on an island beach.

Our island boasts three 18-hole USGA-rated championship golf courses. Lush and well manicured, these public courses ensure ideal golfing conditions year-round.

The Dolphin Experience offers a "Close Encounter" perfect for the whole family. Take a short boat ride to Sanctuary Bay. Learn about, and even touch these dolphins, as you wade in waist-deep water.

Go for a ride in the DeepStar submarine that will give you a spectacular view of our seascape.

Relaxing is also encouraged.

In our outdoor shopping plazas and markets, you will find everything from fine jewelry and china to duty-free liquor and exotic perfumes. In the International Bazaar, stroll through colorful archways along cobblestone paths that lead to quaint and cozy restaurants and shops representing countries from around the globe.

Port Lucaya Marketplace is in a picturesque waterfront setting, with live entertainment and dancing nightly in the main square. Boat lovers will glimpse the impressive array of luxurious yachts anchored there.

Stroll all of the native straw markets located throughout Freeport and Lucaya!

If you are looking to play craps, blackjack, roulette or mini-baccarat, you'll find it all at the Princess and the Lucayan Casinos.

Our natural wonders make our island a fascinating place to explore. At Lucayan National Park there is a rustic wooden boardwalk where you can walk over a mangrove creek to a magnificent unspoiled beach. Ride in an open jeep to inland blue holes, prehistoric caverns and deserted beaches.

From the east end to the west end, you will find the Grand Bahamians to be genuinely warm and friendly. They are always eager to offer you advice, whether you need directions to a remote beach or are trying to find the best conch salad on the island!

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MANTA RAY BAY HOTEL

(Continued from Page 114)

money artifacts are considered so valuable the government has passed a law prohibiting their export.

The Yapese have been very successful at maintaining their unique ancient culture. Their language is different from any other spoken among Micronesia islands. They still teach and practice traditional Yapese dances that include chants, stick gymnastics and colorful dress made from plant fibers and flowers.

Guests staying at the Manta Ray Bay Hotel have an opportunity to witness a traditional village dance on Saturdays, plus tour Yap's best stone money banks, Men's Houses and village sites.

Both Yap Divers and the Manta Ray Bay Hotel are the brainchild of Bill Acker, an ex-Peace Corps worker who has lived on the island for 25 years and raised a family there. Bill is one of the great characters of Micronesia. His dry wit and Texas style humor are totally disarming. While many divers go to Yap for the mantas, they often return because of Bill.

For more information about the Manta Ray Bay Hotel, Yap Divers and events happening in Yap, you can obtain a copy of *Manta Memos*—a quarterly newsletter produced by the hotel.

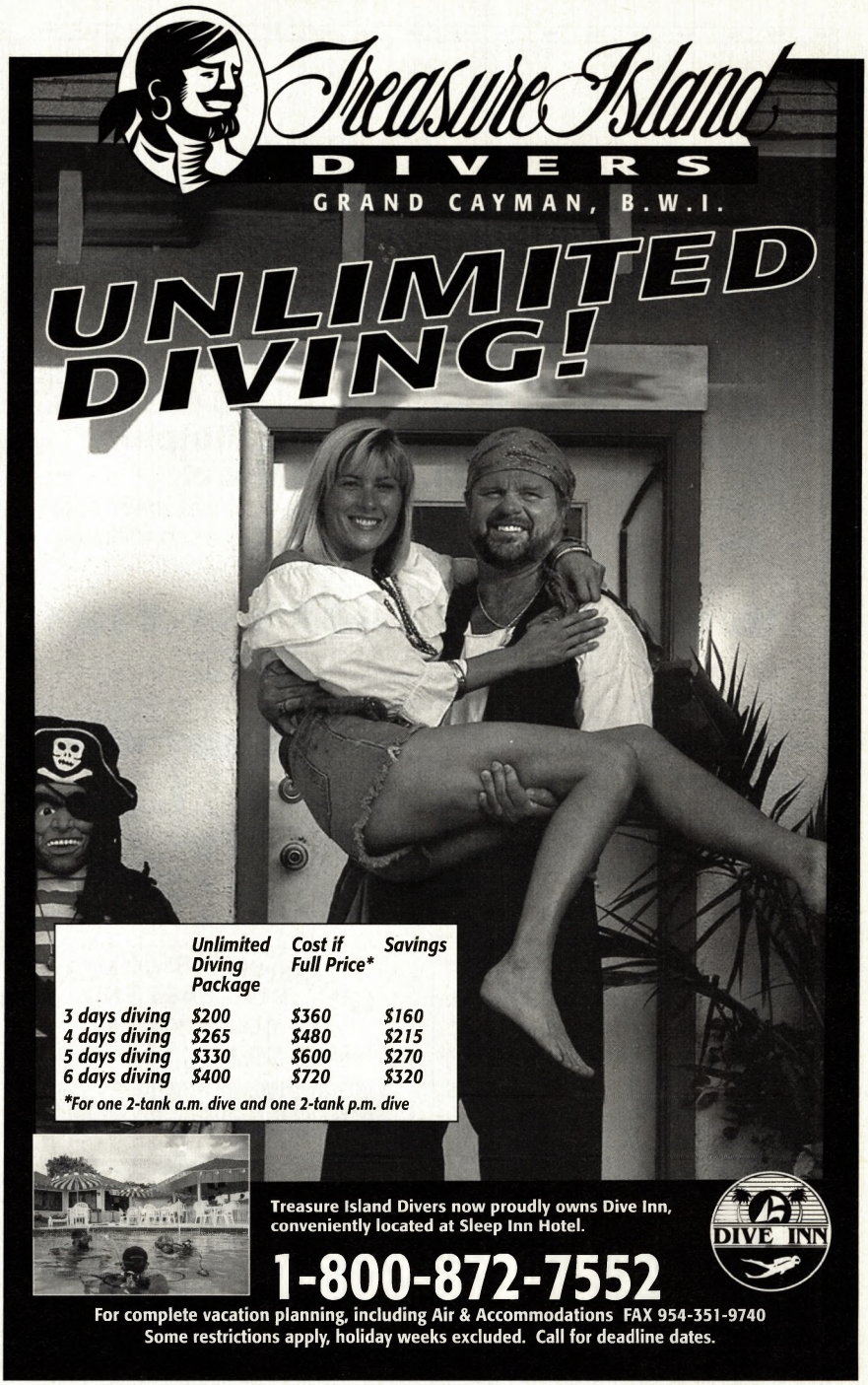
If your computer is tuned to the Internet, you can view underwater photos and read more information about Manta Ray Bay Hotel at its Web Site—http://www.mantaray.com. For direct questions and answers, the e-mail address is yapdivers@mantaray.com.

If you prefer telephone or fax communications, contact Manta Ray Bay Hotel and Yap Divers, telephone (011) 350-691-2300, fax (011) 350-691-4567 or (011) 691-350-3841.

Dive Notes

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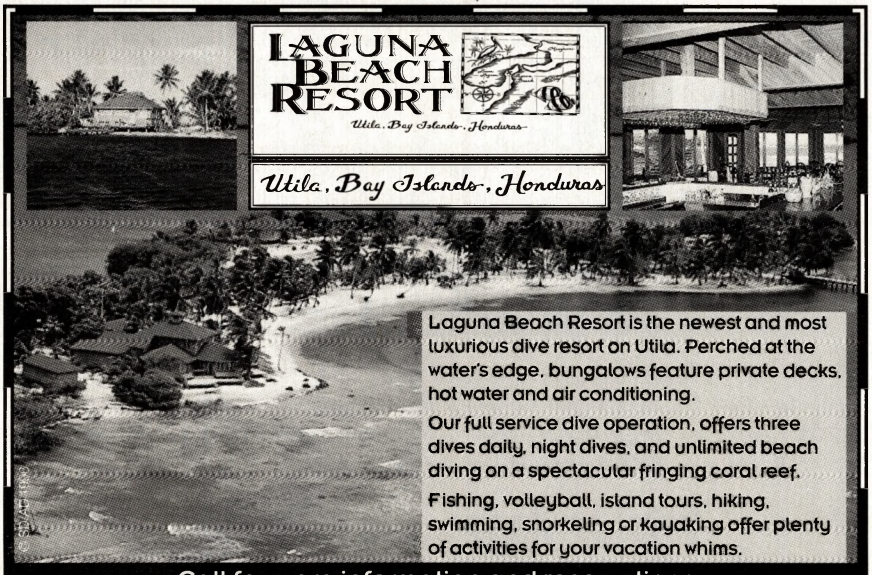
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COCONUT HARBOUR & PARROTS LANDING

(Continued from Page 109)

bagels, juice and hot coffee. The lunch and dinner menu offers a delicious variety of sandwiches, burgers and platters, as well as all you can eat barbecue chicken and ribs and Mexican food a couple of nights a week. A word of warning—if you're not into spicy, watch out for the special recipe Jerk sauce, it's hot!

In addition to specialty drinks, the Blue Parrot is famous for its outdoor sports bar. Every night, all three TV sets and a large screen projection TV are tuned into an ESPN sports event or one of the seasonal games. Capitalizing on Coconut Harbour's only unattractive neighbor, the Blue Parrot utilizes a large white tank at the Texaco Oil storage facility as a screen for the projection system. Now that's creativity! When a big game is on, don't be surprised if the bar sounds a bit on the rowdy side.

Just behind the resort is **Waldo's Reef**, the starting point for a series of noted shore sites. Named for a friendly former resident, a six foot Green Moray, the reef starts as a hard pan bottom with shallow furrows running seaward. It slowly slopes deeper and transforms into a more splendid classic tongue and groove development with several deep undercuts.

The site is popular because it harbors several species of morays and a variety of small invertebrates such as Arrow-crabs and cleaner shrimp. Additionally, several varieties of groupers, grunts and angelfish, both adults and juveniles, frequent the area. At night the site can be better yet. After sundown, it's considered rare not to find at least one or two octopus and/or squid.

Afterward, clean your gear in the shop's rinse tanks before replacing it in the locker with the number that corresponds to your room. The key comes with your room key. Just behind the dive shop, lockers are arranged in a row, with plenty of storage and drying space for two sets of gear (including hangers for wetsuits). Should a second dive fit into the daily plan, grab another tank and go; it's that simple. Often, most days are just too nice to simply lie by the pool.

If you're in need of some new gear or are interested in underwater photography, Parrots Landing's main facility, 500 yards from the resort, will be able to help out. If Parrots Landing's Watersport Center can't provide it, it's most likely not on the island. In addition to the impressive line of equipment, sundries, soft drinks and snacks, the store also hosts a large volume fill station, information/ reservations office (upstairs) and a complete underwater photo and video center.

Supervised by photo pro, Lois Hatcher, the center carries a wide selection of film, batteries and miscellaneous accessories, as well as a full range of rental Nikonos and Sea & Sea camera equipment. There are also a couple of Hi-8 systems available or Lois will shoot your selected dive for a reasonable fee.

In addition to the diverse dive program and services offered with Coconut Harbour, Parrots Landing has a full range of packages with 12 other popular hotels and 16 different condos.

To book direct, call the Parrots Landing reservations center at (800) 448-0428, (809) 949-0294 or fax (809) 949-0294.

GETTING THERE: Traveling to the Cayman Islands couldn't be easier. For United States citizens, a valid passport or a picture ID with a birth certificate or voter's registration will do. U.S. currency and most major credit cards are accepted throughout the islands. From Miami via Cayman's flag carrier, Cayman



Airways, the flight takes little more than an hour. Cayman Airways also offers direct flights from Houston, Orlando, Tampa and Atlanta.

POSADA DEL SOL

(Continued from Page 97)

A special part of a Posada Del Sol visit will be the considerate and engaging staff. They are mostly locals, full of good humor. Tonny Zaid, a Guatemalan hospitality professional educated in the U.S., is the resident manager. Gene and Sarah Bower, well known from the Houston Sea Space shows, are assistant and operation managers. Veteran diver, George Perez, who has spent eight years at Posada Del Sol, is dive manager and photo pro. Five year PDS veteran Luis Galeano is director of dock operations.



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The most popular Posada Del Sol dive package is Saturday to Saturday; the U.S. office can provide packages and routing. For more information, contact Posada Del Sol at (800) 642-3483 or fax (407) 624-3225.

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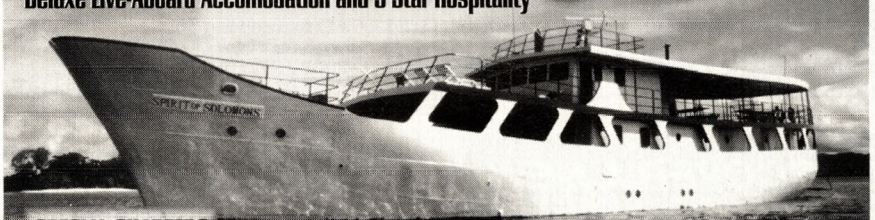
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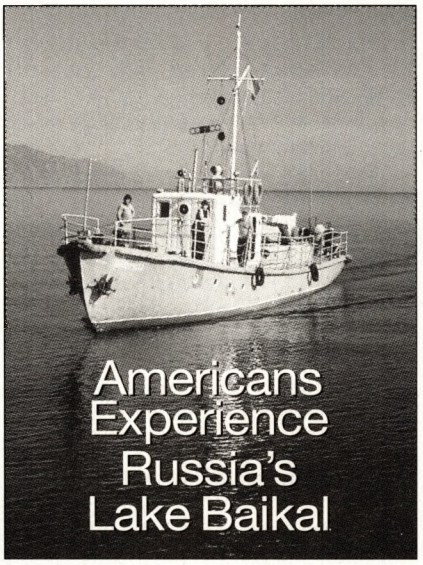
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Diving Glasnost



TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEN NEMETH

Flipping through the pages of SKIN DIVER Magazine, I was pondering my next dive trip when the phone rang. It was Cheryl Kirz of UNEXSO with a unique proposition. "How would you like to be a glasnost diver?" she asked. I was intrigued. She explained that 20 Soviet scuba divers had visited the U.S. in April 1990 and spent a week diving off Grand Bahama Island. UNEXSO, the Bahamas based Underwater Explorers Society, served as host for this two week sojourn and a reciprocal visit for U.S. sport divers was in the works. This would be one of the most unique dive trips ever planned.

Lake Baikal, the world's largest, oldest and deepest confined body of water, was our destination. In southeastern Siberia, west of the Yablonovy Mountains, the lake covers 12,160 square miles. Known to the Soviets as the great and sacred sea, it is more than 400 miles long and 18 to 50 miles wide. Containing about one-fifth of the world's fresh water (and 80 percent of all freshwater reserves in Russia), this vast natural resource could cover the continental United States with 23 feet of water.

This trip would prove historic for the 10 Americans and two West Germans who participated. Not only would we be the first foreign sport divers to venture into a beautiful Russian wilderness, we would also carry goodwill and high hopes for world peace and mutual cooperation.

The successful Underwater Explorers Society was founded in The Bahamas 30

years ago. And UNEXSO's chairman, John Englander, has a reputation in the diving industry as an intrepid adventurer.

During their trip to The Bahamas, the Russians were astounded by UNEXSO's Dolphin Experience and treated to a pulse raising encounter at Shark Junction. The friendships and respect that resulted from the visit led to plans for a group of Americans to travel in the Soviet Union in August 1990.

After a nine hour flight to Moscow and a three hour pause at Soviet customs, we were met by our interpreter and whisked to the Hotel Orlionok. The next two days were filled with tours of the Kremlin, Red Square and a very uneasy shopping trip to Arbat Square, where two members of our group were arrested by the KGB. While in Russia, you may not use American dollars to pay for anything, even if every vendor in the marketplace is clamoring for them. So, after one and a half hours of interrogation and a written, signed confession, our companions were released. The vendor who asked for our currency did not fare as well.

A midnight flight across the Soviet Union ended with our morning arrival at Novosibersk (New Siberia), home of our hosts, the Neptune Dive Club. Siberia has a population of 25 million and Novosibersk is its unofficial capital. Dr. Sergeui Lymar, a chemist at the university, was responsible for organizing and orchestrating the American visit. We were taken outside the city to a *dacha*, which resembles a three story hotel and provided the finest accommodations we experienced. During an interview with the local television station, we were told the Russians considered us pioneers and very brave Americans.

Novosibersk is also the home of Akademgorodok (Science City), which hosts a university research center and three of the Soviet Academies of Science. The cultural facilities and consumer goods are much better here because the Russians place a great deal of emphasis on a healthy, auspicious academic environment.

Our Aeroflot jet arrived in Irkutsk on August 16 but, because of an overbooking, we were unable to secure rooms at Lake Baikal for two days. Undaunted, we boarded a bus and traveled to the Limnology Institute for a lecture on the history and ecology of the lake. What we learned was astonishing.

Baikal is the oldest lake in the world, dating back some 23 million years. Ten nations began a program in the summer of 1990 to try to solve some of the mysteries of this submerged Grand Canyon. First, the lake is growing about two centimeters per year. This is occurring because two tectonic plates are pulling apart, forcing the land between them to drop even lower and the banks to widen.

A team composed of members of the



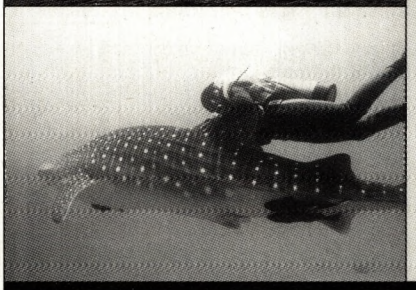
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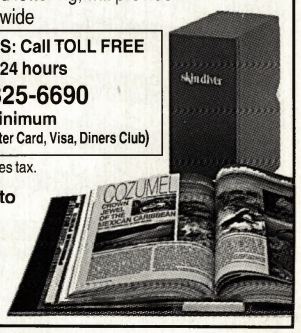
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Soviet Union's Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society searched the lake and found super heated vents that carry nutrients and unusual life forms from the lake bottom. Vents of this nature have never been found in a lake before.

Dr. Joe MacInnis, one of the world's leading authorities on cold water diving and author of several diving texts, participated in the exercise. He said that "If fresh water is life to terrestrial creatures, Baikal is the planet's Holy Grail." The lake's unique biology is replete with life forms that exist nowhere else on earth. There are about 100,000 freshwater Fur Seals, called *nerpas*, whose closest relatives are nearly 1,235 miles to the north in the Arctic Ocean. The *golamianka* (naked flesh) is a transparent fish, from the family Comephoridae, which inhabits the deepest parts of the lake. It gives birth to 2,000 to 3,000 live young and appears to melt in the sun when caught. In all, the lake contains about 50 species of fish, including pike, perch, Bullheads and the largest, Sturgeon, which can grow to lengths of six feet and are prized for their caviar. The *omul* is Baikal's most famous food fish and a staple for Russian Olympians.

"Because of its age and geographic isolation about 35 percent of the plants and 65 percent of the animal species found in Lake Baikal are endemic," says Dr. MacInnis. "This means that about 1,000 to 1,200 plants and animals there are not found anywhere else on earth."

The weather at Lake Baikal can be unusual as we discovered when our hydrofoil docked after an hour's passage from Irkutsk. A sunny, 76°F day had become 64°F with a hard rain and high waves.

As we prepared to make our first dive, there was much interaction between the Soviets and the Americans. We marveled at the thin aluminum tubes they used as snorkels and the laces on their fins. Their small, round masks were reminiscent of a different age. Double hose regulators



photo/Gina Winchester

Above: Lake Baikal, in southeastern Siberia, is the largest, oldest and deepest confined body of water in the world. Many of its plants and animals are endemic.





Aluminum snorkels, lace up fins, round masks (above) and double hose regulators (right) were standard issue for the Russians in 1990. There was also an absence of BCs, pressure and depth gauges.

were almost standard issue and there was an ominous absence of BCs, pressure gauges and depth gauges. Drysuits for the 50°F water were applied in several layers by the Soviets. Thanks to our diving equipment manufacturers, the Americans were strictly high tech, which aroused much Soviet curiosity. Later in the trip John Englander would present the then new U.S. Divers Impulse snorkels to all of the Soviet divers, along with a complete set of diving gear, including the U.S. Divers Cousteau BC, Conshelf SE2 regulator, state of the art dive computer and Nokia drysuit.

Even with their lack of equipment, it was evident to us from the beginning that the Soviets were excellent divers. In fact, their watermanship could be considered exceptional compared to the typical American sport diver.

The Soviet dive boats were more closely akin to steel trawlers with little deck space except at the bow and stern. Cross-legged entries were used for a jump of about seven feet to the water's surface. Americans were assigned a Soviet dive buddy whose duty was to lead the dive and provide assistance. Establishing communications underwater was immediately important since Soviets view our typical OK sign—thumb and index finger touching—as similar to what Americans mean when they extend the middle finger from a closed fist!

It was immediately apparent that we had arrived at the lake during an algae bloom. The warm summer sun had multiplied the effects and the water's surface resembled pea soup. However, on our initial descent it was evident this was a very special place. Green sponges were everywhere. It was the first time any of us had seen large candelabra sponges in a freshwater lake. Crabs and tiny snails populated the sponges in their quest to purify the upper levels of the water column. The remains of small white fish began to appear in large numbers. We were told that this is a type of sculpin that mates in the summer, then dies after giving birth. At 50 feet the green cloud seemed to dissipate and the gravel-like bottom developed a more exaggerated slope. Throughout the lake we examined small shrimp and larger prawns that appeared similar to the saltwater types we'd seen before. Near 100 feet, in the 40°F water, the candle shaped sponges changed significantly. Now they were as flat as dinner plates.

A spectacular wall dive was to follow. Large boulders with an alabaster hue stacked the drop-offs. Sheer cliffs of ivory textured rocks plummeted to unknown depths. At its center, Lake Baikal is 5,370 feet deep. That is evident as one stares into the infinity of this seemingly boundless abyss.

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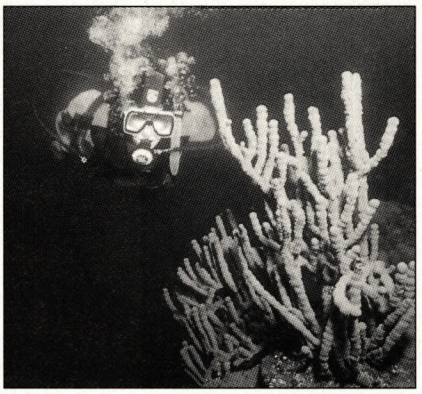
NEXT MONTH DISCOVER *THE HERMES*
IN THE CONTINUING SERIES OF THE
SHIPWRECKS OF BERMUDA

Let Us Help You Choose a Dive Destination— Next Month in ...

skin diver

DIVING GLASNOST

our Soviet hosts enlisted the services of a large Aeroflot helicopter. During this three hour odyssey we were only able to travel the southern half of this immense body of water. Mountain goats and sheep grazed along cliffs rising thousands of feet. Vast fields of multi-colored flowers surrounded the mountains while freshwater seals frolicked below in the glistening, sun drenched waters. The Baikal area also supports Russian black bears, bobcats, lynxes, sables, muskrats and wolverines, hunted on a limited basis for their fur.



A diver examines large, green candelabra sponges—a rare sight in a freshwater lake.

Of some environmental consequence to the lake is the controversial Baikal Pulp and Paper Combine, a state sawmill built in the late 1950s to produce cord cellulose. Opponents are concerned the combine's waste could damage Baikal significantly. That has led to the development of an Institute of Ecological Toxicology, which examined the sawmill's waste water treatment process and declared it harmless to the lake.

We were privileged to experience Lake Baikal but the real treasure here was our association and interaction with the remarkable Soviet people. The cultural, political and philosophical differences among us and our countries were nowhere apparent. Their awareness of the rest of the world and their thirst for contact with the West was unmistakable.

The friendships that developed will transcend international boundaries. Olga Lokshina, a computer scientist in Moscow, and Sue Golden, an attorney in Washington, D.C., were dive buddies and became good friends. Olga, incidentally, was the only licensed woman scuba diver in what was the USSR in 1990 (mining and scuba diving were offlimits to Soviet women). The sport of scuba diving once again has proven to be an international means to overcome the barriers created by language, economics, culture and politics. Would we return? Just ask us!

The Best of COZUMEL

1997 DIVE & TRAVEL GUIDE







Sr. Victor Vivas Gonzales
Mayor of Cozumel

As Mayor of Cozumel, and on behalf of all of us who are fortunate enough to make this Caribbean paradise our home on a year-round basis, I extend to you a hearty welcome to this uniquely beautiful and hospitable island, so Mexican at heart and so Caribbean in soul.

Whether you are a diver, a snorkeler or a beachcomber, you will discover that the captivating blues of our Caribbean, the brilliance of our white-sand beaches, and the tastiness of our special blend of Mexican, Mayan and Creole cuisine are surpassed only by the warmth and friendliness of our people.

There is an old saying in these parts: "Once you experience the waters of Cozumel, you shall return again and again."

Welcome to your second home, amigo!

Victor Vivas
Mayor

Welcome to COZUMEL

A Small Island with Big-time Diving!

Bienvenidos a Cozumel and to the 1997 Best of Cozumel Dive & Travel Guide! We have assembled here a concise dictionary, if you will, to the best that Cozumel has to offer divers. The best airlines, hotels, dive operators and dive travel specialists that will make your diving vacation simply the best! Numerous on-island guides are available at the airport to help you plan your off-diving activities.

Cozumel is an eclectic mixture of the traditional past and progressive modernity. It has managed to maintain a laid-back and relaxed pace of yesterday Mexico yet offers all of the services of larger and more modern destinations. It is a mixture of Maya and Mexican culture but caters to tourism (its largest source of income) from all parts of the world. The same fishing boats used 50 years ago share the waters surrounding Cozumel with modern and fast dive boats as well as the super-luxury cruise ships that frequent the island. In essence, Cozumel has all of the charm, serenity and beauty of a "small" island with many of the comforts, amenities and variety of a "large" island.

The town of San Miguel has transformed itself from a sleepy fishing village to Cozumel's commercial center. Contained within the grid of streets or *calles* that make up San Miguel are an incredible variety of shops, where native Mexican, Mayan and Yucatecan handicrafts are sold, restaurants serving local specialties to seafood delights to international cuisine, hotels and bars and nightlife that seems to be continuously buzzing with activity. The ancient tradition of the *siesta* has not been forgotten, however, and many shops close in the afternoon from 2:00-5:00 pm, so plan accordingly. Sunday nights in the central plaza of San Miguel is a time not to be missed. All of Cozumel's families, including the children, dressed in their Sunday best, congregate (from around 7:00 to 10:00 pm) to leisurely stroll, converse, eat ice cream and sometimes dance to the Caribbean or Mariachi sounds that entertain the community.

Cozumel is a very casual, relaxed island. Comfortable clothing is the rule. Shorts and comfortable shirts are almost always acceptable and ties for men are a rarity, while sundresses and skirt/blouse combinations for women are common. Safety is not a concern for tourists whether day or night. You can safely walk the streets at any hour without the fear of crime, which is almost non-existent. Walking is the best way to catch the local flavor and in town nothing is more than a ten minute walk away. For further excursions, taxis are readily available and inexpensive 24 hours a day. Always ask to see a list of tariffs if you're unsure of the rate.



AIRPORT: Cozumel's modern international airport. Complete your Mexican Tourist Card and Customs Declaration prior to arrival (on the plane) and remember to sign the back of both forms. First you'll clear Immigration where your passport or proof of citizenship is required. Then, proceed to Baggage/Customs to pick up your luggage.



CUSTOMS: Present your Customs Declaration form to the officer and you will be asked to press a button on a machine resembling a stoplight. It flashes, at random, either a green "Pase" or red "No Pase". Green means proceed while red requires a quick check of your baggage. The process is very speedy, usually 15 to 30 minutes maximum.



AIRPORT TRANSFERS: Taxis are not allowed to pick you up at the airport. Instead, comfortable eight-passenger vans are used to shuttle visitors to the various hotels. If you don't have a transportation voucher, purchase one from the booth right outside Customs. Present your voucher to a van driver and he will make sure you get to the right hotel.

Cozumel TRAVEL & HISTORY









"Cozumel" is actually a Mayan word, not Spanish. It is derived from the Mayan word "Cuzamil"—Land of the Swallows—referring to the swallows that migrate to the island each year in early spring. The Maya were the first known settlers on the island and used it as a fishing base. They also built stone temples and altars to their gods. Small in comparison to some of the mammoth structures of other nearby Mayan archeological sites such as Chichen Itza, Tulum and Uxmal found on the Yucatan mainland, the remains at San Gervasio and El Cedral still provide an interesting surface interval and history lesson. Young Maya women of the surrounding areas on the Yucatan Peninsula were required to travel to Cozumel to make an offering to the goddess of fertility, an amazing 12 mile journey considering it was done in dugout canoes!

History has it that two shipwrecked Spanish monks were the first foreigners to Cozumel, washing ashore around 1517. Although one kept his vows, the other married and went on to become a leader in the resistance against Spain and Cortez when he landed on Cozumel shortly two years later. Cozumel later became a base for pirates conducting raids on passing ships and legend states that captured booty still lies hidden in the island's jungle interior. Several centuries of Spanish, pirate and Maya fighting finally resulted in a peace treaty in 1906. The area of Quintana Roo, including Cozumel, became recognized as a state by the Mexican government in 1976.

In the 1950s tourism to Cozumel began slowly, taking advantage of the airfields built with the help of the U.S. Army during World War II. Mostly sailors and fishermen visited the yet undeveloped island in the beginning but rumors of incredible diving on the reefs surrounding Cozumel attracted the adventurous aquanauts who continue to flock here every year. Today, the island boasts a modern, international airport catering to divers from all over the world, who make their trek to this diving Mecca. Cozumel has also become one of the mainstays on the itineraries of cruise ships and several large piers have been constructed to accommodate the passing behemoths—but not without controversy.

Cozumel has grown with the beat of tourism but remains a treasure among Caribbean islands—one to be respected and enjoyed. Whether it's the shopping, the tasty cuisine, the relaxed culture and pace, the first rate hotels, the nightlife, the beaches and sun or the world famous diving that attracts you, try to sample a little of each. If you do, you won't be disappointed and you'll probably want to return again and again.

ISLAND FACTS

Location: Isla Cozumel, the Island of Cozumel, is just south of the tip of the Yucatan Peninsula in the state of Quintana Roo, 12 miles from the mainland.

Size: Cozumel is Mexico's largest island, measuring approximately 31 miles long by 8 miles wide.

Population: Approximately 75,000 residents and growing.

Language: Spanish is predominate, some Mayan by locals and English is widely spoken. Most tourist areas are bilingual.

Climate: Subtropical, averaging 80°F year-round. Light to moderate rainfall, usually in brief showers. Can be subject to strong Northers and hurricanes.

Clothing: Casual attire at all times. Shorts and shirts, dresses and blouses.

Time: CST (Central Standard Time) equivalent

Municipal Services: Police, fire, postal and emergency services.

Health Services: Public hospital, several private clinics, 24 hour emergency medical and dental care. At least two hyperbaric chamber facilities.

Phone & Fax: Available at all major hotels. Calling stations in town for a fee.

Banks: (*Bancos*)—Numerous banks in town and in the central plaza. Many exchange booths around town and at major hotels. Most hotels will also exchange travelers checks or convert currency for guests at good rates.

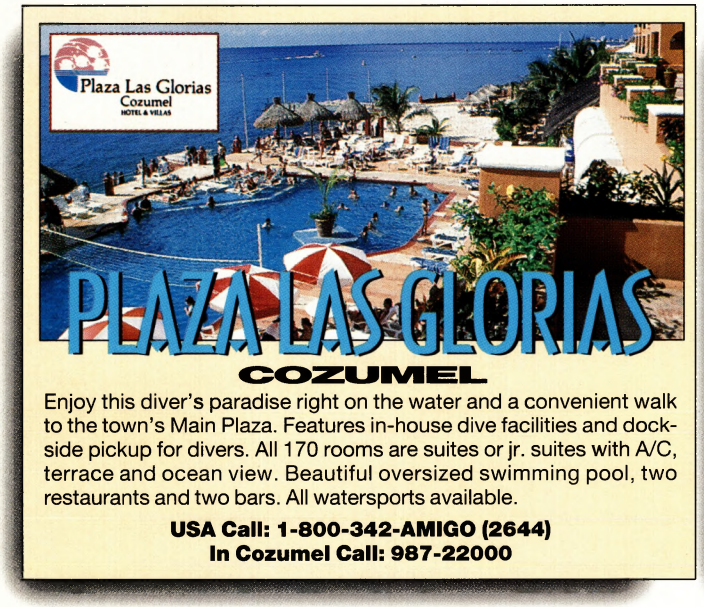
Currency: Pesos. There are two kinds of pesos in circulation—old and *Nuevos Pesos* or new pesos. The new pesos simply eliminated the last three zeros of the old peso. The symbol is proceeded by an N or N$ combination. The old currency is still valid but is being phased out of circulation. Exchange Rate at time of this publication: $1 U.S. = N$7.5

Pricing: Inexpensive to moderate.

Cozumel's Best HOTELS

All styles and classes of accommodations are available on Cozumel to suit your individual preference. The range includes private villas or houses, small and economical lodging (mostly in town), dedicated dive resorts, four and five star resorts and all-inclusive properties where everything is included in one price. The dedicated dive resorts, larger hotels and the all-inclusives are clearly the most diver-friendly as most are on the waterfront with easy pier access for dive boat boarding. Many also have integrated rinse tanks, outdoor showers and private lockers near the piers to store your dive gear safely, so transporting equipment from your room every day is unnecessary. Modern amenities such as restaurants, bars (and happy hour), pools and daycare, laundry, fax and phone service as well as a variety of activities are available at all major hotels.

Hotels are usually grouped into three main areas on the island. The **Hotels of the North** are just north of the town of San Miguel and closer to the airport. Many have outstanding pools, private white sand beaches and some of Cozumel's best snorkeling. Although slightly farther from the popular dive sites, several have created beach and dive access on the southern end with complete, integrated diving operations. The **Hotels of San Miguel** (called downtown or central) are mid-sized and economical but do not offer the diver-friendly services and amenities that the larger hotels do. The **Accommodations to the South** (of San Miguel) are modern four and five star hotels and resorts, dedicated dive resorts and all-inclusives. Most are waterfront properties with easy access to dive boats, shore diving, shorter boats rides to the most popular southern reefs and incredible near-shore snorkeling. Choose one from among the following to meet your individual needs—they're the best there are in Cozumel!



PLAZA LAS GLORIAS
COZUMEL

Enjoy this diver's paradise right on the water and a convenient walk to the town's Main Plaza. Features in-house dive facilities and dock-side pickup for divers. All 170 rooms are suites or jr. suites with A/C, terrace and ocean view. Beautiful oversized swimming pool, two restaurants and two bars. All watersports available.

USA Call: 1-800-342-AMIGO (2644)
In Cozumel Call: 987-22000

FIESTA INN

Three-story beachfront hotel located 1 km from downtown & 7 km from the airport. 180 attractive air-conditioned rooms with marble baths, remote control color cable/satellite TVs, direct-dial phones & views of ocean or pool. Beachfront restaurant, lobby bar featuring laser Karaoke, large swimming pool, tennis court, private beach club with sport fishing, windsurfing, jet skiing, snorkeling & scuba diving, lockers & private pier, motorcycle & car rental.

1-800-247-3483 • 1-800-346-6116 • 1-800-797-2582
Local Ph: (987) 2-28-11 or (987) 2-28-99 Fax: (987) 2-21-54





In Whatever Language...It's Paradise!

Welcome to Paradisus, our five-star, luxury resort located on the loveliest beach just two miles north of town. This being Paradise, you'll never have to concern yourself with quality and cost. Paradisus offers the finest of everything for one inclusive price. The amenities are first class and our recreation goes far beyond watersports to include horseback riding, steam room, gymnasium, game room, nightly shows and daily entertainment. And the only tip you'll give is to tell your friends about Paradisus.

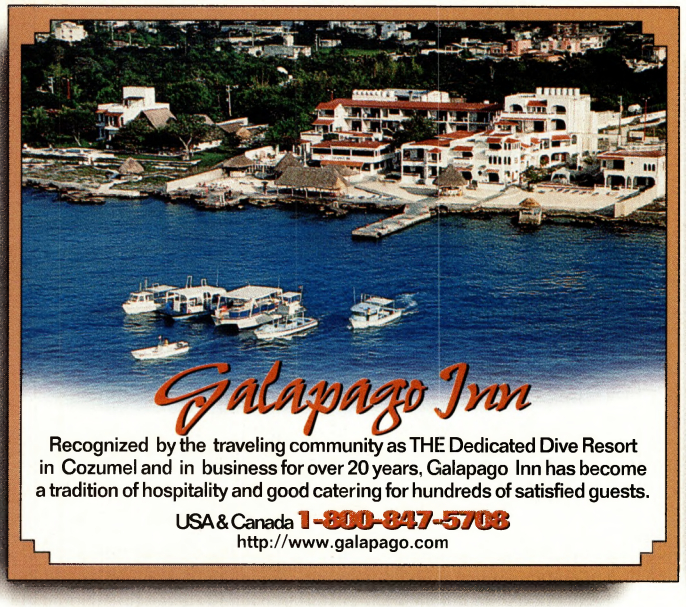
Call 1-888-341-5993
for Special Dive Packages

SOL CABAÑAS DEL CARIBE



A small, intimate hotel retreat, located amid lush gardens, overlooking a pristine white beach and the clear blue waters of Cozumel. An ideal vacation spot or honeymoon hideaway, the hotel offers 40 spacious rooms and 8 cozy, private beachfront cabañas. Warm, attentive hospitality and a relaxed, friendly atmosphere, international and local specialty cuisine, superb diving and deep-sea fishing, waterskiing, windsurfing, sailing, or lazy picnic cruises will make your stay here memorable.

Call 1-888-341-5993 for Special Dive Packages



Galapago Inn

Recognized by the traveling community as THE Dedicated Dive Resort in Cozumel and in business for over 20 years, Galapago Inn has become a tradition of hospitality and good catering for hundreds of satisfied guests.

USA & Canada **1-800-847-5708**
http://www.galapago.com

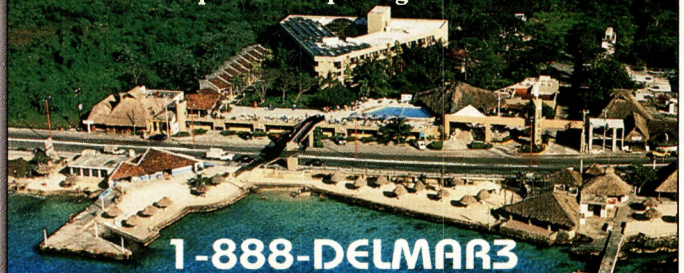


FIESTA AMERICANA
COZUMEL REEF

A modern, five-star beach and dive resort with 172 oceanfront rooms and 56 new Tropical Casita Suites located just minutes from Cozumel's top dive sites. Luxury amenities include an exclusive beach club and private pier, "Dive House," an integrated, on-site dive operation, three restaurants, three bars, a lighted tennis court, a jogging trail, two large pools and a quality gift shop. All rooms are equipped with satellite TV, A/C, phones, purified water and complete baths while the Tropical Casita Suites offer Servi-Bar, safe and hammock in the terrace in addition. For reservations, call your travel agent, favorite dive wholesaler or dial **800-FIESTA1**.

CASA DEL MAR

Enjoy comfort and pleasure at one of Cozumel's most established dive resorts. Casa Del Mar offers 8 multi-level cabañas and 98 spacious rooms complete with air-conditioning and satellite TV finished in a charming Mexican motif. Open air restuarant and poolside "palapa" bar. Full dive facilities from Del Mar Aquatics and special dive packages available.



1-888-DELMAR3
Fax: (214) 392-2040 • Local: 011-52-987-21900
http://www.mexicoweb.com/sombrero • E-mail: sombrero@airmail.net



La Ceiba Beach Hotel

Get a real flavor of Mexico at Cozumel's most historic & charming beach resort at the edge of the sea. 113 spacious ocean-front rooms with purified tap water, A/C, phone, cable TV, mini-bar & pool bar, private beach, tennis court, massage, exercise & sauna rooms & full dive facilities.

US: 800-877-4383 or Fax: 214-392-2040 or Cozumel: 011-52-987-20844
E-mail: laceiba@cozumel.rce.com
http: www.iminet.com/mexico/cozzol.html



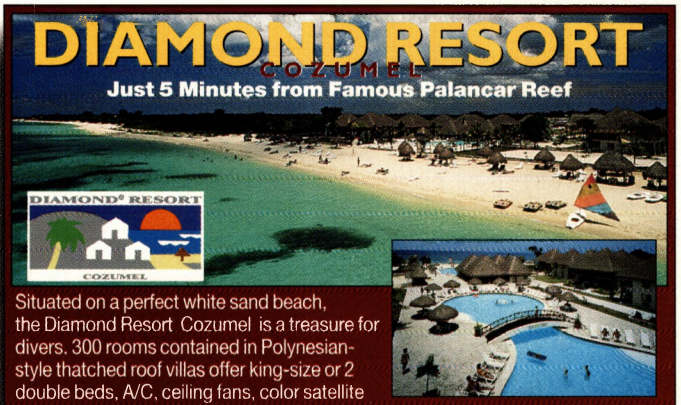
Coral Princess Hotel & Resort

Completely remodeled and ultra-modern, the 139-room 5-star resort is located just north of the town of San Miguel. Whether the Penthouses, a villa or studios are your style, all rooms include A/C, color TV (with remote control), new furniture and beds, safe deposit boxes and direct dial phones. The luxury resort also offers 2 restaurants, 3 bars (with food), 2 pools, beach volleyball, car rental and travel agency, laundry and baby sitting service, parking, souvenir shops and a friendly bilingual staff. Most major credit cards accepted. Call to make your dive dream vacation come true!

1-800-253-2702
Local: (987) 23200 • Fax: (987) 22800

DIAMOND RESORT
COZUMEL

Just 5 Minutes from Famous Palancar Reef



Situated on a perfect white sand beach, the Diamond Resort Cozumel is a treasure for divers. 300 rooms contained in Polynesian-style thatched roof villas offer king-size or 2 double beds, A/C, ceiling fans, color satellite TVs, phones and full bathrooms. Packages include all meals, snacks, drinks and juices as well as unlimited alcoholic beverages! An on-site, modern dive operation offering PADI/SSI certifications and a flexible dive schedule, 4 lighted tennis courts, 2 pools, 2 restaurants, volleyball, basketball, sailing, snorkeling, bicycles, kids' activities, live entertainment, excursions and more for your vacation whims.

An Allegro All-Inclusive Resort
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Cozumel DIVING

COZUMEL'S TOP 16 DIVESITES

N=Novice, I=Intermediate, A=Advanced

1 PARADISE REEF N
Abundant marine life. Excellent for snorkelers. Good chance of finding Cozumel's Splendid Toadfish. Popular night dive. (Max 45')

2 BALONES OF CHANKANAAB N
Series of balloon-shaped coral heads. Colorful, abundant marine life, lobster and crab. (60-70')

3 TORMENTOS REEF I
Colorful coral heads teeming with marine life including eels and angelfish. (40-70')

4 YUCAB REEF N
Dense reef full of abundant color and marine life including grouper, eels, lobster & crab. (Max 60')

5 PUNTA TUNICH I
Discover friendly grouper, lobster, crabs and eels while drifting along a vibrant, colorful reef. (Best 40-60')

6 SAN FRANCISCO REEF I
Shallowest wall dive. Abundant marine life. Exciting, not-to-be-missed dive. (Best 35-50')

7 SANTA MARIA REEF I
Beautiful diving with large schools of angelfish. (40-60')

8 SANTA ROSA REEF I
Impressive sponges, colorful overhangs. Divemaster can show you great, safe tunnels. (Min 50')

9 PASO DE CEDRAL I
Spectacular cavern, tunnel & swim-through dive with abundant marine life in a dense, colorful setting. (Max 60')

10 CEDRAL WALL I
Fairly flat but brimming with color & life. Cover a lot of reef in the normally strong current. (50-90')

11 LITTLE CAVES N
Labyrinth of colorful canyons, deep ravines and narrow crevices. (Best 50-70')

12 BIG HORSESHOE I
Giant coral heads come within 20' of surface. (Max 100')

13 PALANCAR GARDENS N
Beautiful dive with lots of color. Many nice caverns. (Best 40-70')

14 PALANCAR CAVES N
Beautiful canyons, tunnels and caves alive with abundant marine life. (Best 60-90')

15 COLUMBIA REEF I
Coral pinnacles tower over an impressive drop-off. Frequently see big marine life. (Best 60-80')

16 PUNTA SUR A
Incredible topography and huge caverns. Home of the widely acclaimed "Devil's Throat." (Min 90')



The majestic and massive coral formations in a rainbow of colors, amazing underwater visibility and tropical temperatures make Cozumel the most popular dive destination in the world! For more than 20 miles toward the southern end of the island, the variety is endless—coral cathedrals, patch reef, ledges, tunnels, swim-throughs, caverns and vertical walls are all blanketed with spectacular Caribbean hard and soft corals and sponges contorted by the north to south Yucatan current. Cozumel is one of the few destinations in the world where visibility of 150 to 200 feet vertical and 200 feet horizontal is common. Water temperatures vary little (less than 10°) throughout the year with an average of 82° F.

Nearly all diving in Cozumel is drift diving because of the current. While this can be intimidating for the inexperienced diver, it should be an effortless and exhilarating sensation, similar to flying. Pay close attention to the pre-dive briefing for instructions, dive within your experience level and don't be afraid to sit one out if you're not comfortable. It's always a good idea to do a "warm-up dive" in a controlled environment if you feel unsure or are unfamiliar with a destination. Take advantage of the wonderful and easy shore diving that Cozumel offers, too. The divemasters are almost all bilingual and can answer any of your questions. Contact the following dive operations and services to fulfill your diving dreams!

COZUMEL'S ONLY PHOTO PRO SERVICE & RENTAL CENTER
SCHOOL OF UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY
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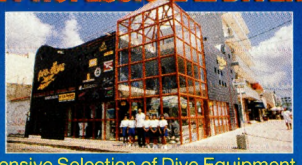


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E - mail: alentado@rce.com.mx
Phone (011-52-987) 2-58-33 • Fax (011-52-987) 2-00-65

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OPERATORS/SERVICES

Dive House Cozumel



Located in downtown's central plaza & the Fiesta Americana Cozumel Reef Hotel, minutes from the best dive sites, we offer service & instruction to all levels of divers with the most modern fleet of boats in Cozumel. PADI, NAUI & SSI. Divers Grouped According to Experience Level.

DIVE HOUSE I — 42' 12 divers max.
DIVE HOUSE II — 30' 10 divers max.
DIVE HOUSE III — 46' 12 divers max.
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ADRIANA — 28' 6 divers max.

Special Trips & Larger Groups Gladly Accommodated

Dive House: 011-52-987-2-1953, Fax 011-52-987-2-3068
E-mail: dive@divehouse.com
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Internet: http://wwwdparadise.com



S.C.U.B.A. Cozumel is the in-house dive operation for the Galapago Inn Dive Resort. A 5-Star PADI International Training Center with a staff of full-time instructors, offering all levels of certifications, a wide range of equipment sales & rentals and daily dive trips to the reefs with a fleet of 7 custom-built dive boats. All boats have VHF radios, oxygen, first-aid kits, Coast Guard-approved emergency equipment and dive platforms with step ladders.

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Caribbean Divers International

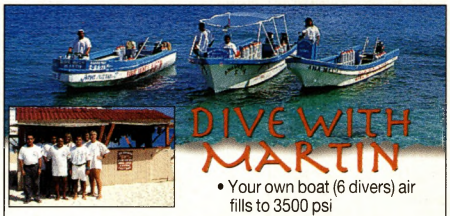
"Experience Underwater Ecstasy" with Us.

We emphasize quality, service and safety. Instruction in English, Spanish and German. Resort through Divemaster courses are available at our waterfront training facilitiy at Chankanaab Park. Charters, Rentals, Repairs and Retail with 5 locations in Cozumel. PADI, NAUI, PDIC, FMAS.

Ph: 011-52-987-21080 or 21145
Fax: 011-52-987-21426
E-mail: caridive@rce.com.mx



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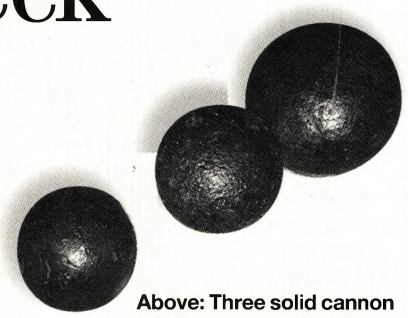
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St. Marys River Mystery Wreck

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOWARD B. TOWER, JR.

I first saw her bones in 1974 but didn't recognize them; perhaps because my mind was still on the black glass, free blown bottle, circa 1780, discovered minutes earlier. And, there was no point in spending time studying a jumbled mass of rotting timbers when my eagle eyed partners might be locating cannon balls or coins a few feet away. So, after a brief glance, I continued to hunt for artifacts.

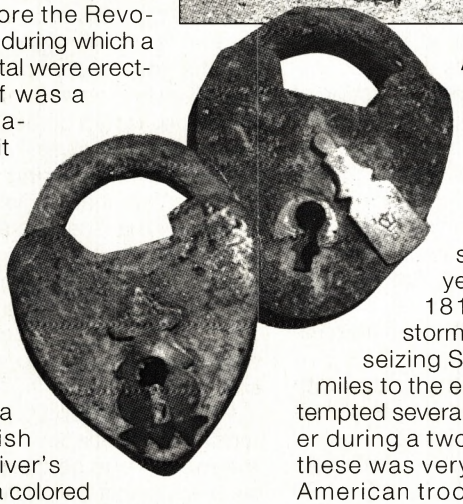


Above: Three solid cannon shots: 6, 9 and 12 pounds.



Scrubby Bluff, bisected by Interstate 95, lies on the Georgia side of the Saint Marys River, which forms the common border with northeast Florida. Thousands of motorists cross the river daily, unaware that below is a stage on which two centuries of turbulent historical dramas were played. My research uncovered much information on the site, which led to our first visit in 1973.



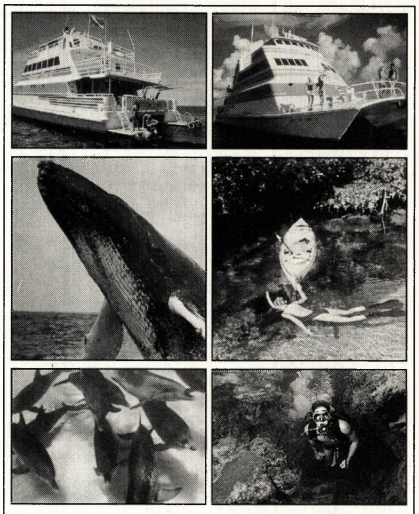


Above: A timber fragment with an oxidized iron pin. Left: Two padlocks, circa mid-1800s, found near Scrubby Bluff, Georgia.

A plantation was established on this bluff two decades before the Revolutionary War, during which a fort and hospital were erected. The bluff was a strategic location because it offered a commanding view of the St. Marys. The opposite bank, a mere 200 yards distant, was Florida—a loyal British colony. The river's deep tidal, tea colored water was the scene of numerous bloody conflicts for five years. Scrubby Bluff was visited several times by British forces, which, at some point, seized, burned and sank an American galley armed with several cannons.

In 1783 Florida returned to Spanish rule and normal plantation life at Scrubby Bluff resumed for the next 30 years. During the War of 1812, British forces stormed the St. Marys River, seizing St. Marys, Georgia, ten miles to the east. The Red Coats attempted several penetrations of the river during a two year period. None of these was very successful because American troops, protected by the dense forest along the banks, poured volleys of musket/rifle fire at their English adversaries, inflicting heavy casualties. Scrubby Bluff saw its share of musket and cannon fire.

From 1815 until 1861 industry flourished at Scrubby. A sawmill turned out millions of board feet of lumber and vast



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ST. MARYS RIVER MYSTERY WRECK

quantities of turpentine and pine tar. The surrounding marsh was cultivated for rice and the high ground was farmed for tobacco. Barges and flats shipped these crops and products—mainstays for the world economy of that day—to Fernandina, Florida, a deepwater port and gateway to Europe. Owners of Scrubby Bluff celebrated their wealth by purchasing fine china and silverware from England and wine from France.

But, guns at Charleston shattered economic prosperity. Federal troops seized Fernandina in 1861 and Union gunboats prowled the river. At Scrubby, Confederate forces posted lookouts and, from time to time, light artillery, which dueled with U.S. Navy warships. However, as the conflict progressed, federal strength increased and southern forces lost their grip on the river. By 1865 every major plantation and industry along the St. Marys was reduced to ashes.

The Civil War ended slavery and the plantation system but a national/worldwide demand for lumber sparked a rebirth of the sawmill industry in the 1870s. Steam whistles blew once again at Scrubby and massive circular blades turned virgin yellow pine, cypress and cedar forests into building products. By 1920 these resources were depleted and the sawmills dismantled. Today, only remnants of the riverfront docks remain, mute testimony to a dynamic industry of another era.

DIVING THE ST. MARYS

Our early dives began at the eastern end of the bluff and were very successful. We located a polyglot collection of Victorian era glassware, stoneware and china. Unexpected discoveries were large, fossilized sharks' teeth three to five inches long. The river bottom consists of stairstep ledges carved in limerock, dropping in increments of five to eight feet to a relatively flat channel floor. Crossing mid-channel, one encounters a sandbar that tapers from the Florida side.

We worked toward the bridge with successive dives and the closer we came to this arch of concrete and steel the older/more historic sites we discovered. Within 200 feet (east side) of I-95 we found two 30 pound Parrett shells and numerous iron grape shot 1.5 inches in diameter, vestiges of Civil War battles. The river bottom was littered with broken china and we recovered a large quantity of glassware, circa 1830 to 1860.

Just west of the bridge, on a cold January day, I discovered the 18th century rum bottle mentioned earlier while my companions found several solid shots of various sizes. During this hunt, 100 feet west of the bridge and 50 feet from shore, I noticed the bottom began to slope upward even though I was heading toward mid-stream. Moments later I realized I was on the top of a submerged island that was littered with timbers/beams embedded deeply in the compact mud/sand. As mentioned, I quickly moved on but what I saw settled in the recesses of my mind.

During the next eight years, I discovered numerous historic sites, including several shipwrecks, and developed interpretive skills concerning wrecks of different periods. One day in 1982 I realized what I'd seen at Scrubby Bluff was not jumbled timbers but a wreck. I contacted an archaeologist from South Carolina who had worked closely with me and asked him to discuss my discovery with archaeologists in Georgia and see if they would be interested in visiting the site. It should be noted the Georgia archaeological establishment had shown little interest in working with divers, so I thought my friend in South Carolina could spark their interest in the wreck and, perhaps, in working with me.

On a hot summer day two archaeologists and I visited the wreck and conducted a study of visible dock remains. They were very excited by what they saw and declared the wreck to be more than 100 years old and historic. But, no one could determine exactly what type of vessel it was or what its cargo was, if any. One archaeologist, unable to cope with the dark water and current, kept getting lost and my companion and I spent a good deal of our time rescuing him. Everyone agreed more work, using a dredge, would be necessary to discover additional clues.

My next visit, during winter, with a noted U/W archaeologist, was interesting to say the least. An air compressor was trailered to the bank adjacent to the wreck. At the archaeologist's bidding I manhandled a hose and a 20 foot section of PVC pipe out to the wreck. A chicken farmer on shore operated the compressor.

In an upright position the pipe extended five feet above the surface and the monstrous compressor created such an updraft that water spewed high into the air, a giant blackwater fountain. At the edge of the wreck, between two frames, we sucked away decades of mud, digging a trench two feet wide, three feet deep and six feet long. Our first observations were the marks of circular saw blades on the vessel's frames, proof the craft was constructed

after 1840. It was also clear the vessel had been sunk for an extended period of time. The water at Scrubby is brackish, a mixture of fresh and saltwater. The iron pins—more than an inch in diameter—used throughout the ship were so corroded they could be snapped like matchsticks. The iron, in most cases, was reduced to an oxide.

We found no cargo and, after pulling an iron bolt from a timber, the archaeologist decided it was time to quit. Several days later I wrote a letter to Georgia officials offering to formally relinquish any interest in the wreck and, in oral communication, encouraged the state to excavate the site. Years passed and I never heard a word from the state.

But, as time permitted, I continued to dive the river around Scrubby and found two anchors. One of them has a shank nearly 14 feet long and, from the condition of the iron, must have been lost more than 200 years ago. The other, crafted about 1850, weighed more than 200 pounds. The possibility of an adjacent wreck prompted a careful search, my light stabbing three feet in the darkness, but nothing was discovered.

Also, in subsequent years, I shared my information concerning Scrubby Bluff and the wreck with another diver. He, with a friend, began exploring the vessel. They discovered two iron pipes—more than four inches in diameter—extending upward from the side closest to shore, an indication the ship was steam powered. If so, its engine is entombed under sand and mud. Also, a block or brick measuring 9 by 15 by 3.5 inches was discovered in the wreckage (it may be cargo). It appears to have been cast in a mold and is not metallic. A one-eighth inch thick layer, which chemically reacted with the water, is black and can be pulled away easily, exposing a hard pale green substance. At this writing it has not been analyzed.

The wreck's identity is a mystery but explorations over the years have developed useful information. She was well built, as least 60 feet long and perhaps 15 feet wide, constructed of hardwood, perhaps oak, sometime after 1840. There is evidence of machinery on board and some sort of cargo, which indicated the craft was lost while engaged in commerce. The condition of the wreck strongly suggests she was lost prior to the 1880s, possibly as early as the 1840s. The "island" of sand/mud in which the wreck is embedded was formed as the river cut into the existing bank over the decades—the vessel was docked when it sank.

The site can be found with ease. About 100 feet west of the I-95 bridge at the edge of the river stands a dead pine tree with its bark gone and its roots exposed by the shifting river. The wreck is directly out from this natural marker. Its depth is about 15 feet maximum.

Any blackwater dive, and the Saint Marys River in particular, is challenging. Divers must be mature, confident of their abilities and have advanced training. Among the potential hazards are low visibility, current, snags, snakes and alligators.

In 1986 Georgia's Antiquities Law was revised and, while one can explore, observe and photograph the state's submerged cultural resources, recovery of submerged antiquities requires a permit. For more information, write the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, attention: State Archaeologist, Historic Preservation Section, 205 Butler Street, SE, Suite 1462, Atlanta, Georgia 30334-1703.

A company called Underwater Associates is interested in any information developed as a result of your exploration or research concerning this or other sites in the Southeast. Interested persons should write to Underwater Associates, 3332 Eman Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32216.

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BAUER UTILUS-10G PORTABLE COMPRESSOR

(Continued from Page 36)

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forward on the hinged motor plate, detaching the V-belt from the motor pulley, then withdrawing the gas engine and replacing it with the electric motor drive. The setup is completely modular and each type of engine fits into the mounting frame the same way. The engine and compressor both have handles and can be easily removed from the noncorrodible aluminum frame and stored separately for space conscious travel.

For internal dependability, the Utilus-10 uses only approved compressor oil that is specially formulated for its noncarbonizing effects, anti-corrosive properties, minimum emulsification of condensation in the crankcase and toxilogical and physiological suitability.

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Utilus-10G	4.3 scfm*	19 min.**	5	Gasoline	Triplex	30 by 14 by 20 inches	97 lbs.	$4,400
Utilus-10D	4.3 scfm*	19 min.**	4	Diesel	Triplex	40 by 14 by 23 inches	120 lbs.	$5,370

*Based on charging an 80 cubic foot tank from 500 to 3000 psig. **Time required to fill an 80 cubic foot tank from 500 to 3000 psi.

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Dive Notes

BENEATH THE SEA: Everyone is invited to the New Jersey Meadowlands for Beneath The Sea's 21st annual Undersea Exposition March 22 through 24, 1997. There will be 260 exhibitors plus 50 different programs and workshops. Renowned divers Stan Waterman, Bret Gilliam and Brian Skerry will attend. There will be an International Underwater Photo Contest sponsored by the Aggressor Fleet and Peter Hughes Diving, large dive tanks for scuba, Discover Scuba and rebreather demonstrations, and the New York debut of the Nikon School of Underwater Photography.

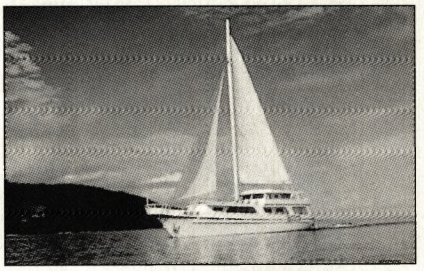
The Cayman Islands will sponsor the Decompression Party, Dive Paradise will host the Cozumel Fiesta, PADI will host the VIP Awards Breakfast and door prizes will be abundant.

Exhibits will be at the Meadowlands Exposition Center; the Saturday Evening Film Festival and Decompression Party will be at the Sheraton Meadowlands Hotel.

Send a SASE for tickets or information to BTS Info, 495 New Rochelle Road, #2A, Bronxville, NY 10708. Complete information is also available on the Internet at http://www.cyberus.ca/~bts/. For general information, call (914) 664-4310, fax (914) 664-4315 or e-mail to Zig4bts@aol.com.

HUMPBACK WHALES IN TONGA: See & Sea Travel of San Francisco completed a successful series of Humpback Whale cruises last August. A new series is planned for July and August 1997.

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For further information, contact See & Sea Travel, Inc., 50 Francisco Street #205, San Francisco, CA 94133 or call (415) 434-3400, fax (415) 434-3409, e-mail divxprt@ix.netcom.com or visit on the Internet at http://www.divxprt.com.

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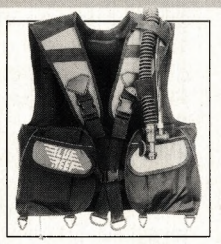
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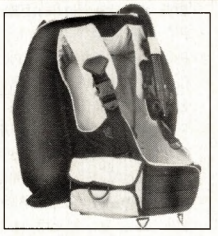
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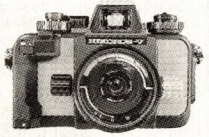


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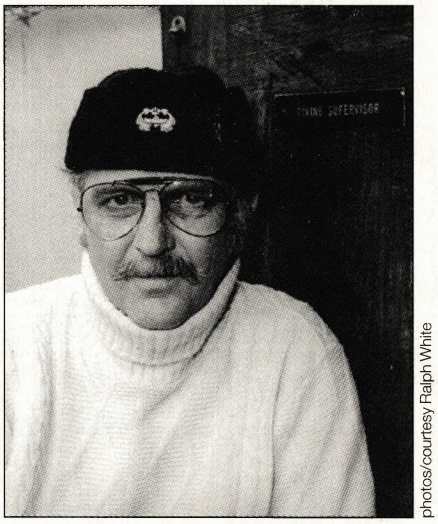
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Ralph White

Underwater Adventurer Extraordinaire

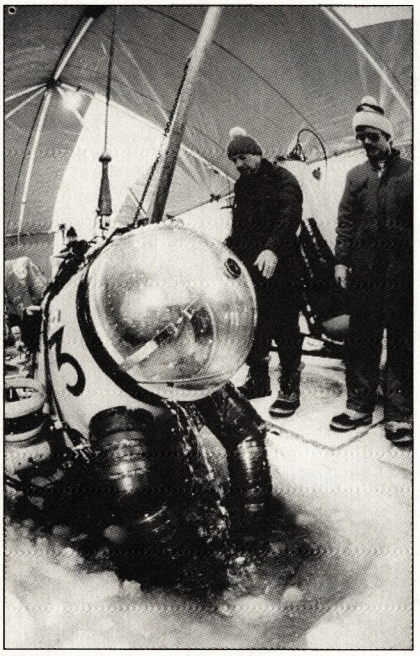
BY PAUL MCCALLUM

Ralph White has logged more bottom time on the *Titanic* than any other American. In fact, he's made more dives than the entire 1986 American Expedition. *Titanic* is only one of the more than 400 projects Ralph has worked on. His resume reads like a guide to underwater adventure. Photographing the *Breadalbane* required diving 350 feet below Arctic ice. Searching for the fabled Loch Ness monster, Ralph spent three months diving in near zero visibility. His work on National Geographic's *The Great Whales* won him an Emmy. He has been in the water with Piranhas, Saltwater Crocodiles, Great White Sharks and Killer Whales. Often working at depths in the 4,000 to 20,000 foot range, Ralph has had experience with almost every type of submersible made.



photos/courtesy Ralph White

Ralph White's vast array of U/W adventures include a world record deep submersible rendezvous, exploring the *Titanic* and searching for the Loch Ness monster.



Above: A WASP diving suit was used to dive the *Breadalbane*. The wreck is 123 miles from the magnetic north pole and 350 feet beneath the frigid Arctic ice.

FIRST DIVE

Ralph White was born in San Bernadino, California, in 1944. In 1945, his father relocated the family to Hawaii, where Ralph grew up. He first learned to skin dive when a friend gave him a pair of crude goggles. "They were made of bamboo, with glass glued to them. I remember when I got down deep, the goggles pressed into my eyes. It hurt so badly, if you can imagine this dried bamboo pressing into your eye sockets."

In 1955 Ralph logged his first scuba dive with a family friend, Joe Crawford. Armed with a set of triple tanks and a double hose regulator, Ralph spent most of his spare time underwater.

"Sometimes those triple tanks would get so buoyant I would literally put rocks in my shirt and shorts. Occasionally, the rocks would be covered with stinging coral and I would get these terrible rashes. Basically, I was 14 and not using my brain. I'm lucky I didn't kill myself on those early dives."

In 1961 at age 20, Ralph joined the Marines. As part of the elite Marine Force Recon, he became a military diver. After the military, Ralph found work at North American Aviation.

For recreational purposes he took up training as a glider pilot. When the wing fell off the airplane during his seventh hour of training, he discovered sky diving. He has since logged 2,997 jumps.

Wanting to share his sky diving experiences, Ralph started to invent helmet mounted cameras, wrist mounted cam-

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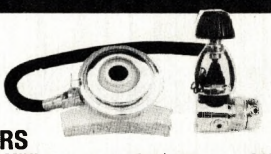
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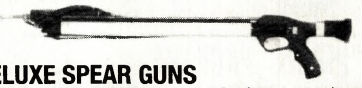
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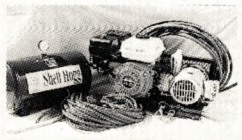


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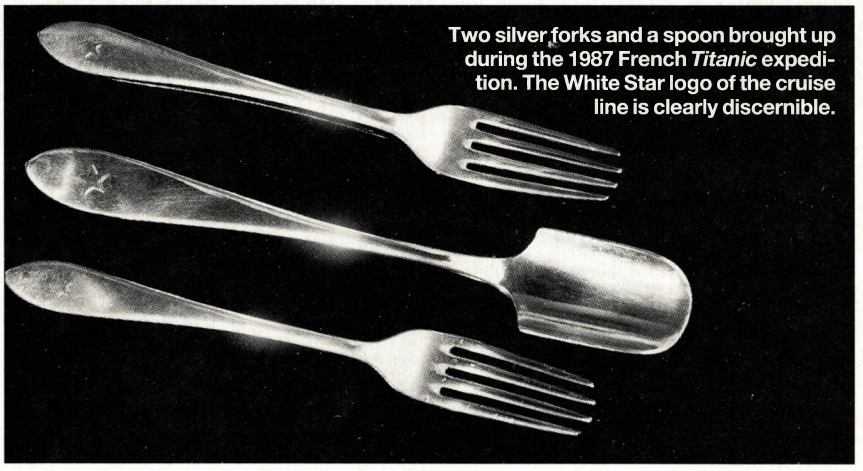
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eras and other photographic gadgets. Naturally, it wasn't long before an underwater housing was also built. Everything had to be constructed from scratch. "The problems with taking a camera U/W were 10 times more complicated back then. My first camera housing leaked so many times I almost gave up."

While working at the motion picture lab of the North American Aviation flight test facility, Ralph came across a company memorandum. Dr. Andy Rechnitzer was looking for a diver/photographer who could take pictures of his new submersible, the *Bever Mark IV*. Fresh out of the military and with lots of underwater time with a camera, Ralph got the job.



Two silver forks and a spoon brought up during the 1987 French *Titanic* expedition. The White Star logo of the cruise line is clearly discernible.

LOCH NESS

In 1976, Ralph went to Scotland in search of the Loch Ness monster. Using sonar triggered cameras and underwater baiting techniques he filmed some large eels. One was ten feet long, large enough to be called a monster.

They also found some high concentrations of Arctic Char. Since no one had seen an Arctic Char since the mid 1940s, the local game wardens didn't believe it until Ralph and David Doubilet went down and documented it.

The lakes around Loch Ness are a breeding ground for huge salmon. The salmon were the biggest problem encountered while diving. "David Doubilet, Emory Kristof and I were diving and ...salmon just went through us, knocked our masks off, pulled the cameras out of our hands...a real mess."

Divers on the Loch Ness expedition were supplied with drysuits. Unfortunately, most of the photographers had never used one. Emory Kristof designed some custom weights to go with the new drysuits. "On Emory's first dive, he released the air from his suit and sank so fast his fins folded up parallel to his shins. We had to pull him out of about a foot of mud. It's lucky we saw him sink because the suction was really preventing him from getting out."

DANGEROUS TIMES

Ralph once found himself in the middle of a Gray Reef Shark feeding frenzy owing to overzealous baiting. "I knew we were in trouble when one of the sharks made a direct run at John Bird and cracked his faceplate. It cut him up pretty bad. We had expanded all our bangsticks because they were really getting aggressive. We had to take cover and wait it out."

Ralph's most concerned moment was off San Clemente Island, when Valerie Taylor got raked across the calf by a Blue Shark. While Howard Hall and Marty Snyderman helped her out of the water Ralph called the Coast Guard for a helicopter.

On another dive, Ralph's tank valve sheared off in 80 feet of water. Because his scuba tank filled up with water he found himself so negatively buoyant he couldn't ascend. He was sinking, without an air supply and with a very expensive 35mm movie camera in his hands. The other divers just froze, no one came to his assistance. Howard Hall was standing on the deck of the boat. When he saw Ralph was in trouble he free dived down, without mask and fins, and took the camera from Ralph. "He wanted to help me but I pushed the camera into his arms." Freed from the burden of the camera, Ralph ditched his tank and weights and ascended. "I credit Howard Hall with saving my life that day."

A 30 FOOT SHARK

Ralph's latest discovery was a 30 foot, carnivorous shark in 4,000 feet of water off Japan. To attract these large animals, a cage filled with tuna is placed on the bottom. It's then a matter of waiting in-

side the submersible to see what shows up. "The French crew (who owned the sub) thought we were a little bizarre to want to use a $30,000 a day submersible to bait sharks. They said, 'You know, we can bait sharks right off the fantail, why do you want to use the submersible?' Of course, after the first dive, their energy level was way up."

When the shark showed up, one of the crew yelled, "We got a whale down there." Ralph looked out the porthole and realized it wasn't a whale from the texture of its skin. "I didn't know what it was but I knew to roll all cameras." What followed was an exciting few moments as the animal pushed a 30,000 pound sub around. "At this point we still didn't know what it was because we couldn't see the entire animal."

It wasn't until the animal's head came into view that Ralph recognized it as a Pacific Shark (*Somniosus pacificus*). The problem with photographing large animals in deep water is there's usually not a point of reference to judge their size by. Fortunately, I got footage of the shark by our bait cage. It's 30 feet long and not a plankton eater."

On the same dive Ralph shot footage of a large deep water shark eating another shark of about the same size. It's unique because the shark is swallowing its meal snake style, head first and in one piece. "As far as I know, this is the first time anything like this has been seen."

PIRANHA

An assignment to film a Piranha feeding frenzy presented some challenges. Because visibility in the Amazon River is close to zero, it was decided to film the Piranhas in a specially constructed tank. To avoid being bitten, Ralph built an acrylic sphere. This enabled him to film the fish in all directions without any visual obstructions and still be protected. Since the sphere was sealed, using conventional scuba was ruled out because the exhaust bubbles would create problems. Ralph's solution was to use an oxygen rebreather.

Another device used to film the Piranhas was a piece of PVC pipe with an acrylic dome bolted on each end. Ralph would lie inside the pipe and film through the dome. Once again, the rebreather had to be used.

THE *TITANIC*

Ralph's proudest accomplishment (to date) is his involvement with the *Titanic*. "When I used to think about the *Titanic*, I never conceived in my mind the possibility of ever being able to dive it. So, to be able to dive on it and run the kind of operations we ran in 1987 was probably the greatest thrill of my life."

Ralph is one of the few people to have participated in both the 1985 French/American expedition and the 1987 French expedition. He returned to the wreck in 1991 with the Russians.

One of the most dramatic moments of Ralph's career was his first dive on the *Titanic*. "I was watching the sector scanning sonar so I knew when to really focus attention. It was really dramatic the way the bow suddenly loomed up."

One of the problems with working at the *Titanic*'s depth of 12,558 feet is the cold. Heaters aren't used because of the risk of fire and the temperature inside the sub drops to 2°C. With dives often lasting more than ten hours, observers would get terrible headaches from having their foreheads pressed up against the sub's cold porthole. Bladder control also became important.

A WORLD RECORD

Ralph was a member of the joint Soviet/America team that set the world record for the deepest submersible rendezvous. The submersibles used were the Russian built *MIR I* and *MIR II*. Constructed in 1987 by Ramo-Repolla in Finland at a cost of $40,000,000, the *MIR* subs represented the state of the art in deep submersible technology. *MIR* translated means peace.

In June 1989 *MIR I* was launched from the Soviet support vessel *Keldysh*. An hour later, with Ralph aboard, *MIR II* was also launched. "The reason for the hour separation was to avoid a possible collision between the two subs in the water column. In the three and a half hours it takes us to descend to the bottom, we are virtually a falling brick without power."

Because MIR I landed in a gully, it took the two subs four hours to locate each other. When they did, at 16,500 feet, the record was set. Only a handful of explorers have attained this depth.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The list of Ralph White accomplishments is endless. Ralph was project director on Operation Phoenix, which involved the discovery and recovery of numerous Spanish galleons. He was the first cinematographer to shoot footage of divers swimming with Blue Whales. Ralph has worked extensively with Gray Whales, filming their annual migration from the Bering Sea to Scammon's Lagoon. In appreciation for his contributions, the promontory above the nursery channel was named *Punto Rudolpho*. As a member of the Aegir Habitat, Ralph spent more than a week living below 500 feet.

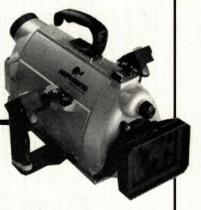
With such a vast array of experiences to choose from, one might wonder what Ralph's most memorable adventure was. When asked this question, he enthusiastically replied, "I hope I haven't done it yet!"

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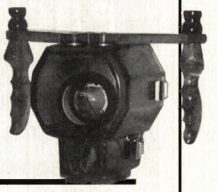
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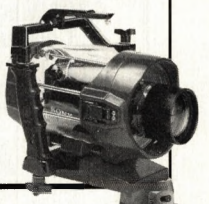
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Dive Notes

BERNARD E. EMPLETON AWARD: Bernard Empleton has been called the father of recreational diving instruction in the United States. In 1954, he formed a committee of dive experts to establish the Council for National Cooperation in Aquatics (CNCA). The CNCA evaluated safety aspects of the new and growing sport known as scuba.

Under his guidance the committee published a textbook called *The New Science of Skin and Scuba Diving*. They developed the first national recreational scuba certification guidelines in 1957 for the Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA). Empleton was the institute's director for the very first national scuba instructor certification training conducted by the YMCA in 1959. These events are milestones in diving history.

One of the industry's most prestigious recognitions, the Empleton Award honors individuals for their outstanding leadership and distinguished service to diving safety and education. This year, Joseph Dabbs and Frank Best Thompson received the Bernard E. Empleton Award.

Joe Dabbs, of Huntsville, Alabama, was certified as a YMCA scuba instructor in 1964. He taught at the Huntsville Central YMCA in the '60s and '70s, started the scuba program at the University of Alabama, Huntsville and taught the Marshall Space Flight Center courses from 1965 to the present. Dabbs managed and consulted the Neutral Buoyancy Simulator, where astronauts receive weightless environment training.

Frank Best Thompson, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, has been a dedicated YMCA scuba instructor for more than 35 years. During the late 1950s he began teaching scuba, making it more accessible and safe for all involved. In 1961, he became a YMCA scuba instructor and gave up his occupation to be full owner of Frank's Underwater Sports Shop. He founded Scuba Explorer Post 604 BSA in 1967 and was described as the youth ambassador of the United States while attending the '72 Munich and '76 Montrèal Olympics.

The award ceremony took place at the YMCA Scuba Convention in Huntsville, Alabama, last November. To make nominations for next year, call the YMCA Scuba offices at (770) 662-5172.

THE HISTORICAL DIVING SOCIETY USA'S ANTIQUE DIVING CARDS: If you like old scenes of early commercial divers, check out the new note cards available from the Historical Diving Society USA. These cards are hand colored reproductions of early wood block prints depicting the earliest days of undersea exploration and adventure.

The cards offer four individual scenes depicting heavy gear dives on the bottom of the sea, climbing out of the water and preparing to dive. The cards measure six by eight inches, are printed on heavy stock and beautifully detailed. Each set includes two copies of each card with envelopes. The cards are blank inside.

The production of the cards was sponsored by Diving Equipment and Supply Co. (DESCO) in the USA and Siebe Gorman & Co., Ltd., in Great Britain. The cards were produced by the Museum of Diving and Underwater Exploration in Gosport, UK. Proceeds from the sale of the cards will benefit the Historical Diving Society USA.

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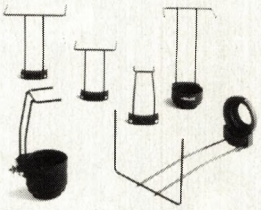
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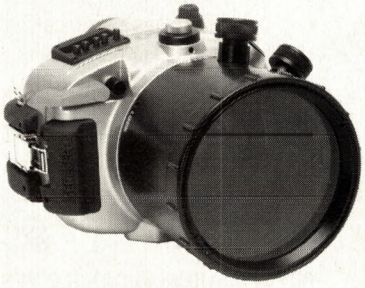
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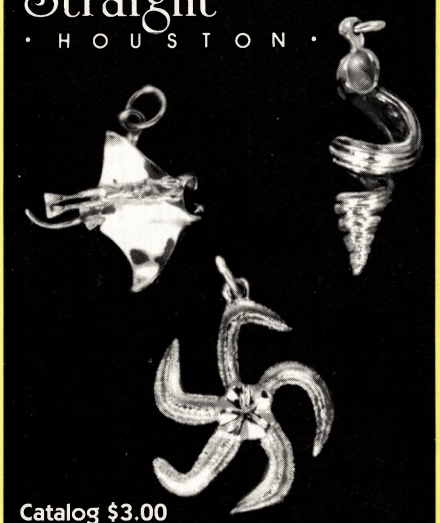
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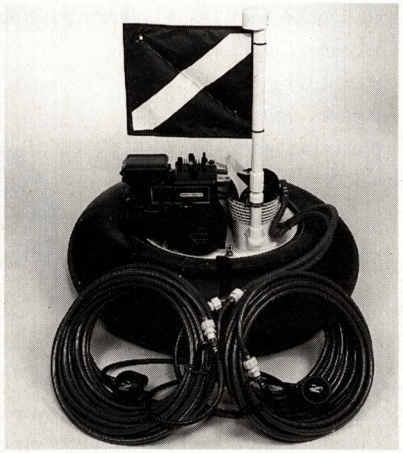
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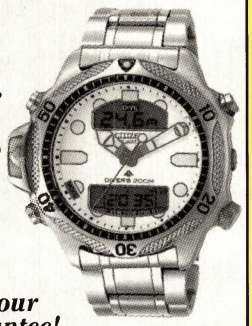
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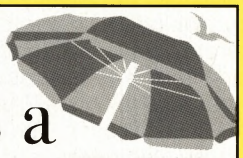
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LEISURE PRO'S BLUE REEF AGRESSOR DIVE COMPUTER

(Continued from Page 99)

The Agressor is powered by a long life, three volt lithium battery. It is user replaceable and should last approximately 2,000 hours.

The operating depth of 220 feet is well beyond the normal recreational limits of most divers.

CONCLUSION

The Blue Reef Agressor is full featured and the automatic functions are especially appealing: most notably the altitude adjustment and the battery monitor. The compartmented display is nicely arranged and the highly utilitarian Diver Pictograph makes diving with the Agressor a breeze by significantly reducing the chance of misinterpreting data. With all its advanced features, the Agressor's suggested retail of $249.95 seems shockingly low, making this dive computer a great value for your money. In addition to the wrist mounted version we had for our review, the Blue Reef Agressor is available in a console configuration. For more information on this top quality and affordable dive computer, contact Blue Reef at 42 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011 or call (800) 637-6880; fax (212) 691-7286.

Dive Notes

PALAU'S *OCEAN HUNTER*: See & Sea Travel of San Francisco is offering a broad variety of 7 and 10 day cruises aboard *Ocean Hunter* in Palau in 1997.

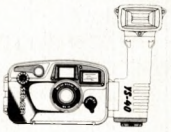


The *Ocean Hunter* accommodates six divers who average 30 to 34 dives per week. *Ocean Hunter* moors right on the dive site to avoid long chase boat rides. This ensures divers can go in the water whenever they are ready.

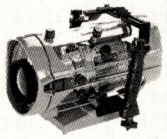
For more information, contact See & Sea Travel at 50 Francisco Street #205, San Francisco, CA 94133; (415) 434-3400, fax (415) 434-3409. You can e-mail to divxprt@ix.netcom.com or visit on the Internet at http://www.divxprt.com/see&sea.

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THE OKEANOS AGGRESSOR

(Continued from Page 30)

photographers and the boat caters to them. There is a freshwater rinse tank and a large camera table—with 110 volt strobe/dive light charging stations—on the dive deck. All Aggressor vessels feature an onboard photo pro, who rents photo equipment, provides free advice and teaches a specialty course resulting in PADI or NAUI certification. The photo pro also processes E-6 film daily and produces a video of your trip that you can purchase.

If you prefer to leave your bulkiest scuba gear at home and rent BC, regulator, etc., this is possible aboard the *Okeanos Aggressor*. While the cost is nominal, the convenience factor is nothing short of phenomenal.

Along with everything else on the boat, the lounge and dining area on the *Okeanos Aggressor* have been refurbished. There is new carpeting and furniture but the very comfortable lounge still features an entertainment center, where guests frequently gather between dives to view just shot videos, and light tables for viewing just processed slides.

In between dives guests also gather on the sundeck to relax, catch a few rays or just enjoy magnificent vistas of Coco's rain forest covered mountains and spectacular waterfalls.

Dive guests are prone to mutinous thoughts when the food isn't plentiful and excellent—all that exercise makes us ravenous. Luckily, the *Okeanos Aggressor* crew is more than equal to the task, producing three wonderful meals each day as well as delicious, energy promoting snacks.

THE DIVING: As you can see from our route map, on most trips the *Okeanos Aggressor* circumnavigates Coco. Many of the sites are offshore rocks, seamounts and islets. The mothership anchors close to the island, two 18 foot inflatables shuttle guests to and from the sites. Considerable care is taken to relieve guests of gear handling. The crew loads everyone's equipment onto and off the inflatables; guests merely step

AGGRESSOR FLEET VESSELS

Vessel	Length	# Divers	Cruise Length	Price*
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Cayman Aggressor III Cayman Islands	110'	18	6 days	$1,495
Galapagos Aggressors I/II Ecuador	80'	14	7 to 10 days	$2,345 (7 days)
Kona Aggressor II Hawaii	80'	10	6 days	$1,695
Okeanos Aggressor Costa Rica	120'	22	10 days	$2,795
Palau Aggressor II Palau	110'	16	6 days	$1,995
Truk Aggressor II Truk Lagoon	110'	14	6 days	$1,895
Turks & Caicos Aggressor Turks & Caicos	100'	16	6 days	$1,495

*Prices good from January through June 1997. Special cruises, such as those with Jean-Michel Cousteau, Stan Waterman or Jim Church, cost more but there are also cruises offered at discount rates—ask when you book!

AGGRESSOR FLEET/ JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU L'AVENTURE SCHEDULE

Project Ocean Search '96
Galapagos Aggressor I — December 12 to 21

Project Ocean Search '97
Fiji Aggressor — August 4 to 11
Fiji Aggressor — August 11 to 18

Jean-Michel Cousteau/Team Nikonos '97
Turks & Caicos Aggressor — June 14 to 21
Cayman Aggressor III — August 23 to 30

Sail with Jean-Michel Cousteau '97
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April 27 to May 4
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April 13 to 20
May 4 to 11
October 12 to 19

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Cayman Aggressor III
August 9 to 16

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Belize Aggressor III
August 23 to 30

Turks & Caicos Aggressor
November 1 to 8

1997 STAN WATERMAN PHOTO COURSES

Bay Islands Aggressor III
January 18 to 25

Kona Aggressor II
May 31 to June 7

Cayman Aggressor III
July 19 to 26

aboard. Also, divers are helped into and out of the water.

Throughout the trip there are usually three day dives and a night dive, the latter depending upon the conditions. The diving is for those with experience only. Water temperatures range from 74 to 78°F, necessitating the wearing of a full, one-eighth inch wetsuit year-round. The water's surface is only flat calm occasionally and currents are a way of life. Most of the diving is drift dives. Visibility averages about 75 feet but can exceed 100. The best action is found between 50 and 100 feet.

Manuelita will most likely be your introduction to Coco diving. Schools of Scalloped Hammerheads are frequently seen here and Whitetip Reef Sharks are much in evidence. **Dirty Rock**, which is actually a large island, offers not only Hammerheads but schools of Marble Rays. **Alcyone**, a submerged rock coming within 70 feet of the surface, has yielded many sightings of Sailfish and Marlin.

While known for its large marine life, Coco also offers incredible macro life. Dare to leave your wide angle setup on the boat and take your macro system U/W and you'll likely be rewarded with shots of frogfish, Snowflake Morays and Harlequin Shrimp.

GETTING THERE: *Okeanos Aggressor* trips are nine or ten days long, with six or seven days of diving. U.S. passengers fly into San Jose, Costa Rica, and spend the night in that city. The next afternoon they are taken by air-conditioned bus to the boat, which docks in Puntarenas, two hours away.

To enter Costa Rica, U.S. citizens must possess a passport or two forms of identification, one with a photo.

For more information on a Coco Island adventure, contact the Aggressor Fleet at (800) 348-2628, (504) 385-2628 or fax (504) 384-0817. You can also write to P.O. Drawer K, Morgan City, LA 70381; e-mail to divboat@aol.com; 103261.1275@compuserve.com or visit the Web Site at http://www.aggressor.com.

Dive Notes

LUXFER USA LIMITED NAME CHANGE: Rapid growth in its aluminum high pressure gas cylinder business worldwide and its intention to diversify into other businesses has prompted Riverside headquartered Luxfer USA Limited to change its name to Luxfer Inc.

The core business of manufacturing cylinders, now called Luxfer Gas Cylinders, is the first division of the new holding company, which also houses Riverside based Superform USA under its corporate umbrella.

"Together with our sister company in England, we have become the world's largest and most successful manufacturer of high pressure gas cylinders," said John Rhodes, president of Luxfer Inc. "We are using our world-class resources and considerable capital from our new stockholders, British Aluminum Holdings, to expand our business so that we can capture an even larger share of the growing world market for aluminum gas cylinders and diversify into other aluminum and non-aluminum related businesses."

More than 20 million Luxfer high pressure gas cylinders are in service today throughout the world in all major gas markets, including life support, medical, beverage, CO_2, industrial gases and scuba. Luxfer Gas Cylinders' 106,820 square foot facility in Riverside, California employs more than 260 workers. The company has additional plants in Placentia, California, and Graham, North Carolina.

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Dive Notes

BELIZE'S BLUE MARLIN LODGE: The Blue Marlin Lodge, on Southwater Caye, is offering three day/four night packages throughout 1997. The packages include accommodations, all meals and diving.



The Blue Marlin Lodge is a PADI Five Star Dive Center with a twin 300 hp Pro 42 leading its fleet of dive boats. The diving is concentrated around the Central and Southern Belize barrier reefs with special trips to Glover's Atoll.

The Blue Marlin Lodge has recently finished two more ocean front private cabañas a mere 20 feet from the water. "The upgrades never stop at the Blue Marlin Lodge and we have added shorter trips to accommodate travelers with less time but who still want the incredible diving Blue Marlin has to offer," says owner Rosella Zabaneh.

For more information regarding the Blue Marlin Lodge you can call (800) 798-1558, Blue Marlin direct at (800) 688-0286 or fax Blue Marlin at (011) 501-52-2296.

NIKON'S FREE POSTERS: Underwater photography fans can now get a free poster from Nikon.

The poster, The New Art, features an underwater macrophotograph of a Banded Coral Shrimp. The photo was taken by world-famous underwater photographer Stephen Frink, using a Nikonos RS. A poster highlighting the Nikonos RS SLR photography system is also available for underwater photography equipment dealers and fans.

Nikon's free underwater posters can be obtained by contacting Nikon Underwater Systems, 1300 Walt Whitman Road, Melville, NY 11747; (800) 52-NIKON. Posters are available on a first come, first served basis and no purchase is necessary.

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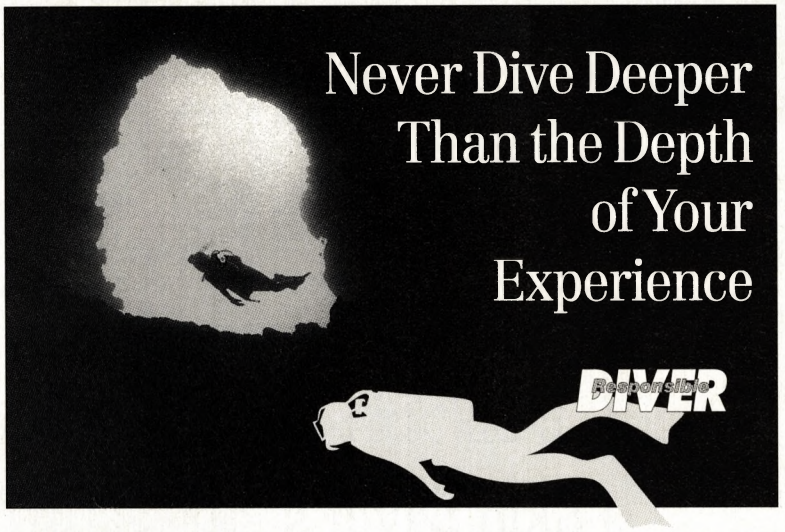
Florida Cave Diving, Puzzle—Which Way Up, Which Way Out?

BY JOHN CALCAGNO

In June of 1990, I was a newly certified divemaster on my first assignment. I was looking forward to this trip because I would be with two students working on their advanced certification. The instructor on the trip (also the dive shop owner) would be working with the open water students.

The site chosen for our trip was one of Florida's many freshwater springs, notorious for their complex cave systems, which have cost many divers their lives.

The instructor/owner, who I will refer to as Bud, briefed me on my task. I was to take the students on their deep dive of the day—70 feet with a proper safety stop. Knowing I hadn't dived this site before, Bud explained the topography of the spring to me. The bottom of the main pool was at 45 feet and to achieve 70 feet we would have to descend into an angular cavern. Bud also warned me not to go beyond a sign posted at the entrance warning those untrained in cave diving to turn back. I was told the cave opening was at approximately 75 feet.



A plant the locals call duckweed covered the spring's surface. Figuring very little sunlight would filter through the weed, I recommended we all take our lights. We started our descent and found conditions worse than we anticipated. The water was extremely muddy. Visibility at 45 feet was five feet and diminishing. After making sure my divers were OK, I signaled the start of our final descent down the cavern shaft. We quickly ran out of what little daylight we originally had and visibility decreased to an arm's length. Keeping an eye on my depth gauge, I found a small plateau at 72 feet. While in a tight formation, I asked if everyone was OK and checked how much air each of them had left. We were in good shape on all accounts. All we had to do now was start our ascent.

When I turned around, I was surprised to see a rock wall in front of me. I glanced left and saw solid rock. I looked straight up and saw rock again. The group was to my right and waiting for me to lead them out. Did I make a complete 180 degree turn? Was there an opening in front of me that I just couldn't see because of poor visibility? I decided not to give in to the demons of my mind. This must be the way we came in.

I started a hand over hand climb and found an opening after all. The terrain was much steeper than I had noticed on the way down. As we started our ascent, I strained my eyes to see any signs of daylight. *It's a clear sunny day*, I thought. *Where's the sun?* Suddenly, the demons returned. I started wondering if this really was the way out or if we were ascending into one of the many caves. I asked the two divers if they were OK. With eyes big as saucers they signaled OK. They stuck to me like glue. I checked my air—1,200 psi. I thought to myself, *If we're lost, we've got about 15 minutes to find our way out. Oh God, don't let me kill these poor guys!*

After what seemed an eternity but was probably less than two minutes, we made the 30 foot ascent. All at once, I noticed some sunlight above. Visibility increased and I could see the edge of a plateau. My first thought was, *If this isn't the way we came in, at least it looks like a way out*. I checked my divers again and they were doing fine. We crested the ledge and swam about 10 feet—then I saw something familiar, a brick lying near a submerged log. We were exiting the cavern at the exact point we had entered. I was both relieved and extremely exhausted. The two divers were very impressed with my navigational skills. Of course, I never let them know I had any doubts. After our safety stop, we surfaced and neither diver said a word. I think we were all glad to be finished.

I learned a lot about myself that day. More importantly, I learned some valuable scuba lessons: (1) Make an orientation dive with someone familiar with the site. (2) Always be prepared for adverse conditions. (3) Setting up a penetration line would have been a good idea; even though you may not be entering the cave or wreck, in poor conditions it will help you return to the exact starting point. (4) If you have any qualms about the dive, abort it and consider going another day.

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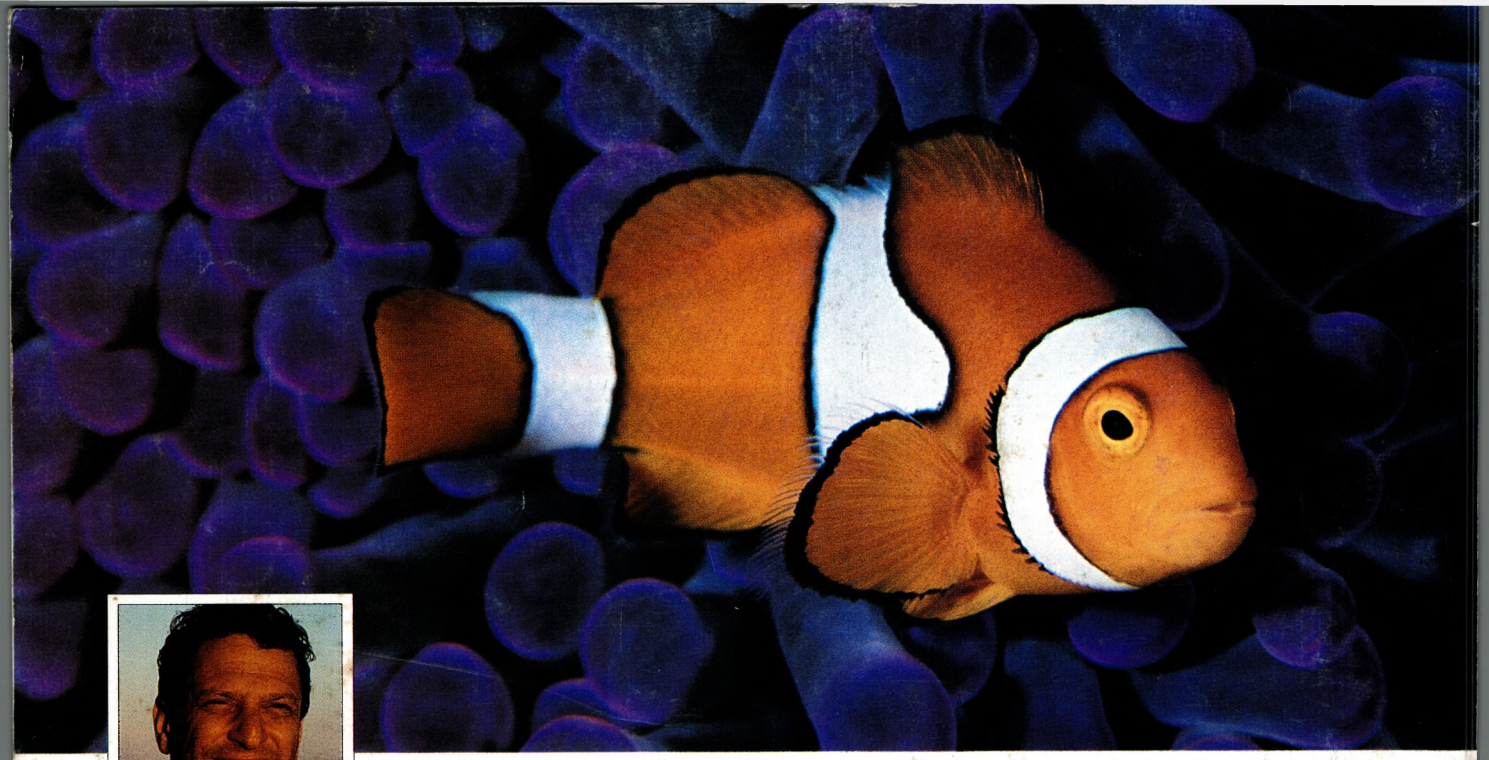
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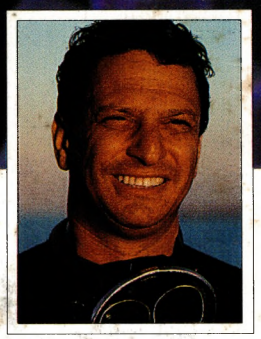
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"To an underwater photographer, time is even more precious than light." *David Doubilet*

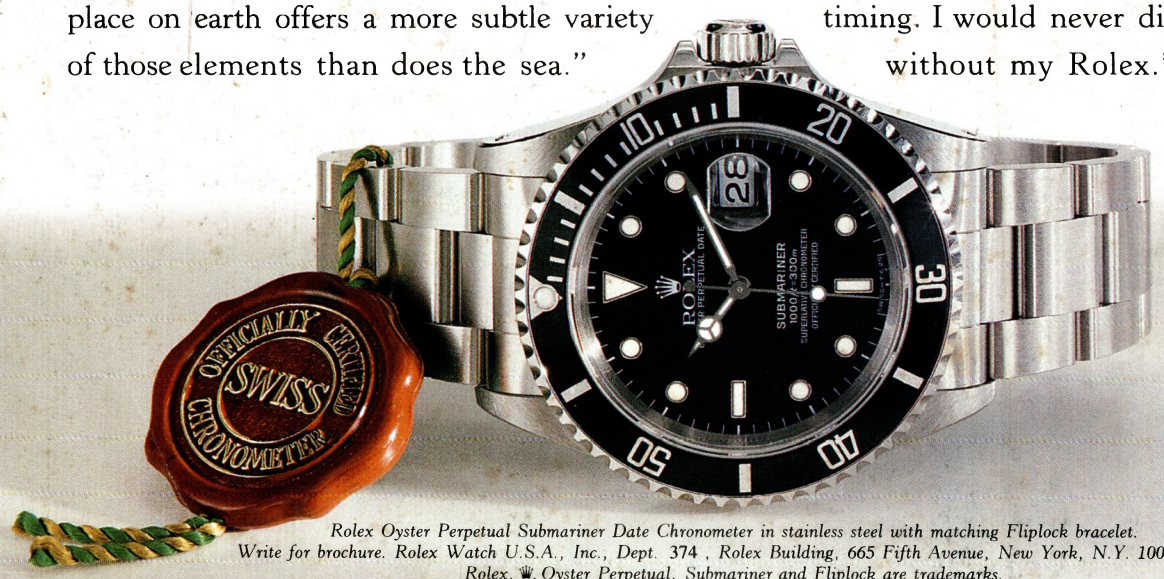
For nearly two decades, David Doubilet has been recognized as one of the world's most artistically ambitious underwater photographers. As elegantly composed as they are painstakingly lit, David's photographs possess the intimacy and detail of great portraiture.

He says, "I look underwater for the same basic elements that a surface photographer does—light, color, motion, and gesture—and no place on earth offers a more subtle variety of those elements than does the sea."

To achieve his singular effects, he and his assistants submerge themselves for hours at a stretch, taking with them as many as ten complete camera systems, spare SCUBA tanks, and computers to carefully monitor their dives.

Yet, of all his equipment, David has come to trust the reliability of his Rolex Submariner most of all. "Underwater," Doubilet says, "your health depends on proper timing. I would never dive without my Rolex."

ROLEX



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